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The Beijing Free Speech Movement, 1978-79

Steel: Can Rationalization Cure Old Age (Without Causing Depression)?

The Red Brigades: Between Stalinism and Leftism

Notes on the Concept of Class

INTRODUCTION

Several articles in *Root & Branch* 9 address issues raised in previous numbers. Developments in post-Mao China continue inscrutable, even to the American left: for example, the discussion which extended over several recent numbers of *Monthly Review* contained little substantial analysis and a disturbing quantity of apologetics. In this issue, Bill Russell continues his analysis, begun in *Root & Branch* 8, of conflicts within the Chinese ruling class. Russell examines the period 1976-79, arguing that the "Bukharinist" or anti-Maoist faction within the bureaucracy attempted to use the dissident movement as part of its offensive against the "Stalinist"/Maoist/Hua faction. But the bureaucracy closed ranks and successfully clamped down when posters and demonstrations escalated, attacking political repression and even questioning Party rule. The episode revealed, if only briefly, sharp class tensions within China, tensions which have yet to find large-scale expression.

The continuing decline of the world economy has reached a point where whole industries seem called into question, on an international scale. The crisis appears as a crisis of the automobile, of steel, of rubber. Each industry attempts to explain its difficulties as due to its particular circumstances, just as each nation ascribes its problems to the unfair competition of other national capitals. In their article on the steel industry, in contrast, Caitlin Manning and Chris Carlson analyze the crisis of this basic industry and workers' responses to it in terms of the general economic downturn.

Although the Italian police have apparently finally succeeded in penetrating the Red Brigades, the organization is far from out of commission. In comparison with analogous attempts at urban guerilla organization in Germany or the U.S., the Brigades have been uniquely effective and organizationally coherent. What are the origins of this organization, and what is its political meaning? These questions, which point both to the nature of Italian politics in particular and to the problem of armed struggle in general, are addressed by an article written by a Turin/Paris collective. It has been translated and edited from a book edited by C. Orsoni and C. Reeve, *Pour une discussion politique sur la lutte armée*, published in 1979 in Paris (available from *Spartacus*, 5 rue St. Croix-de-la-Bretonnerie, 75004 Paris).

In the current strenuous debate on classes in capitalism between culturalist/humanist Marxists and structuralist/Althusserian Marxists, there is a lack of discussion about the nature of abstraction, its use in defining the concept of class, and the function of "class" in explaining historical change. Steve Soldz's article modestly proposes that Marx's class concept is not immediately, but only mediately, relevant to empirical social analysis.

Two articles promised for this issue—the second installment of Paul Mattick, Jr.'s introduction to marxian theory and Charles Reeve's analysis of the development of the working class movement in Spain during the last two years—will be in *Root & Branch* 10, with other articles and reviews. Subscribe!

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STEEL: Can Rationalization Cure Old Age (Without Causing Depression)?

March 23, 1979—Paris: A demonstration called by the CGT is attended by 100,000 workers, mostly from steel. Toward the end of the otherwise orderly event, in which the typical slogans "Save Our Jobs" and "Save Steel" dominate, 150-200 young participants, mostly "marginals" from Paris, attack the police and begin looting, breaking windows, etc. The police are slow to crack down on the looters, lending evidence to the later claim that the government allowed the riot to go on so as to create a climate of fear and desire for law and order, which would lead to support for D'Estaing's decree (later revoked) prohibiting large demonstrations in big cities.

May 1, 1979: The CGT declares it will not support a plan to attack police. When police attempt to disrupt broadcasts by a CGT radio station, the union calls for a strike.

May 23, 1979: Negotiations begin again with the substance of discussions consisting of early pensions, retraining, and severance pay.

June-July 1979: Direct action by steelworkers has diminished, the unions have proved relatively successful in containing the fight and channeling militancy into traditional demonstrations and fairs. Local support is also on the wane. Some workers, especially the younger ones, are quietly accepting the 50,000 franc ($10,000) severance pay offered by the government/industry plan.

As one of them put it:

"What's the point of fighting, when our backs are against the wall, just for the right to bust your ass in front of a machine eight hours a day?"(1)

October, 1978: The two largest French steel producers, Sacilor and Usinor, employing 58,000 workers, declare they are on the brink of bankruptcy. The French government agrees to bail them out, but only on the condition that they reduce production by 20-23 million tons a year.

Months later, while the union leaders are busy negotiating terms with government and industry representatives, the rank and file take to the streets. In Longwy, workers organize into small groups, called "commandos" because of their guerrilla-type tactics. Their activities include stopping shipment of iron ore to steel plants, occupying railroad switchyards and courtrooms, setting up illegal radio stations, and taking over a local television station. The steelworkers enjoy widespread support from the local population, whose livelihood is also threatened by the shutdown plans.

February 25, 1979—Longwy: The daily *France-Soir* headlines "Longwy Under Siege." When the police force workers out of the occupied television station, the workers respond by attacking the police station with a bulldozer and molotov cocktails. By evening they have reoccupied the studios . .The struggle escalates in response to police repression—managers are locked in, their offices sacked

March 6-8, 1979—Denain: The unions call for a demonstration on the highway to protest police harassment. The steelworkers, tired of the traditional, ineffective demonstrations and strikes, choose instead to attack both local and special riot-control police. They imitate the successful commando form used in Longwy. Before long the city of Denain is ablaze with rioting. Police use clubs, gas, and rubber bullets while the workers erect barricades and fight back with molotov cocktails and rocks. In the course of the fighting one worker loses a hand, another a foot . . .

When the (Community Party-dominated) CGT, France's largest union, hears of the riots in Denain, it retreats from the negotiating sessions. In their press and speeches to workers they call for "realism and responsibility," an end to violence, and for occupying the plants instead. Fighting continues for a while, with steelworkers attacking the police station. Thirty workers are wounded, as well as fifteen cops, seven of these by bullets. Eventually the police retreat and most workers go to the factory. Layoffs are temporarily halted, though the government plan is not called into question.

After three months of workers' action, often in opposition to their unions' attempts to control the purpose and tempo of actions, the steelworkers of northern France accepted the futility of their solitary struggle and settled with the French government for a lucrative severance/pension deal.

What are the circumstances surrounding this surge of workers' militancy and why did it prove futile *despite* the emergence of autonomous actions by many workers in strikes, violence against the state, occupations of communications facilities, and widespread community support? To answer these questions it is necessary to consider recent events in light of the changing structure of the steel

industry worldwide: the introduction of new technology and its effects on employment, productivity, international competition, and profits; the increasing concentration and centralization of steel production and the tendency of the state to intervene in this process; and a new international division of labor resulting from a gradual shift of steel production from the advanced industrial countries to the Third World.

The crisis and restructuring of the steel industry cannot be understood in isolation from the crisis in the world economy as a whole. The developments in steel are a microcosm—on the scale of a single industry—of the process of capitalist economic growth in general and its necessary culmination in crisis. The fundamental causes of the crisis in steel and the measures being taken to overcome them are not specific to steel. They offer particular illustrations of the global tendencies of capitalist economic development and crisis.

* * *

Longwy: Crowd burns files and office furniture.

In the early 1970s, when production of steel reached record heights, steelowners throughout the world were busily engaged in expanding capacity to meet projections of increased demand based on past growth patterns. The dramatic turnaround in the steel scenario since then supposedly began with the general recession of 1974-75. In one year, the production of steel plummeted by 19 percent in the European Economic Community (EEC), 13 percent in Japan, and 20 percent in the US.(2)

As late as 1974, at a meeting of the International Iron and Steel Institute (IISI) in Munich, "virtually all of the nations, both from the industrialized world and the developing world, revealed ambitious plans for steel growth."(3) However, as years went by without substantial recovery of profit and production levels, it became increasingly evident to the myopic leaders of industry that this was no mere cyclical swing. By 1977, August Thyssen-Hutte, the largest German steel company, reported that these were the worst years in the history of the industry. Another German producer, Roehling-Busch, lost 100 million DM in 1976-77, and in 1979, Herbert Koehler, head of the German steel producers' association, claimed that, although improved, the profits in steel were "still not satisfactory."(4)

In the US, Bethlehem Steel's 20 percent decline in profits in 1976 was followed by a loss of nearly half a billion dollars in 1977, at the time a record loss for a single company. The state-owned British Steel Corporation (BSC) broke this record with a loss of nearly a billion dollars in 1977, followed by further losses in 1978, and at least $657 million in losses in 1979.(5) Significant losses have been the pattern throughout the EEC, and now it's US Steel that is taking a bath. At the onset of recession, production in most of the advanced industrial countries remained substantially below 1973-74 highs, despite three years of "recovery."

Leading economists of the left and right generally explain the steel crisis in terms of a "lack of demand." Blaming "excess capacity" or "overproduction," the right-wing defenders of industry call for the reduction of productive capacity and higher prices in order to adjust supply to demand and restore profitability. Many government economists of the Keynesian school (as well as some self-proclaimed "Marxists") see the crisis as a consequence of inadequate aggregate demand, or "underconsumption," and call for state control of the economy in order to restore demand by increasing the purchasing power of consumers (adjust demand to supply).(6)

But "excess capacity" is only excess in relation to the needs of capitalists to realize the value of their product (sell it on the market) and so ensure an adequate rate of return. Lack of demand, or "underconsumption," means that not enough value is being produced in the economy as a whole to ensure an orderly continuation of production. This is manifested by a drop in sales, since people no longer have money to buy things, and a halt or decline in production, since capital is unavailable for investment.

The idling of productive facilities and "saturated markets" do not reflect fulfilled needs, even in the advanced industrialized countries (in the US, for instance, 110,000 out of 750,000 steel bridges are in need of repair or replacement). This is to say nothing of the developing countries, many of which still lack basic infrastructure. The onset of crisis clearly reveals that the needs and constraints of capitalist production are at odds with the interests of most people.

As a key economic sector, both because of its use-value (as a basic ingredient of industrial production and military hardware) and because of the enormous mass of capital tied up in its production, steel's advanced signs of crisis are foreboding. The severe disruption of accumulation in steel may well be the lightning before the storm. The dynamic underlying the crisis and reorganization of the steel industry worldwide offers a compelling example of the marxian schema of capitalist accumulation and its necessary culmination in crisis.

The growth and survival of capitalist production relies primarily on continual investment in new technology. Capitalists seek advances in technology which increase the productivity of labor and lower their production costs. An increase in productivity corresponds to an increase in the proportion of wealth (in the form of goods produced or of money earned in selling them) which falls to the capitalist (i.e., surplus-value), in relation to that which falls to work-

ers in the form of wages. In marxian terms, increases in the productivity of labor, by increasing the rate of surplus-value, form the basis of capitalist accumulation (i.e., expanded production).

By increasing productivity before their competitors, some capitalists can sell their products at lower prices, capture larger shares of their markets, and so gain a temporary edge in profitability until others follow suit. Those who lag behind in implementing new production techniques not only lose their competitive market positions but also suffer a devaluation of their accumulated capital (surplus-value invested in plant and machinery—what Marx called constant capital). As new, more productive facilities come on line, they reduce the "socially necessary labor-time" (i.e., value) required for the production of a specific amount of goods. On a free market, the more productive capitalist can charge less for each good, reflecting the smaller amount of labor-time embodied in it. The owners of the less-productive plants are then forced to reduce their prices accordingly, or permanently lose a share of the market. But the reduced price does not reflect the labor embodied in their product, which means they lose this historic value (because it no longer corresponds to socially necessary labor-time).

Rising productivity, however, has contradictory effects. It generally involves a displacement of workers by machines (described by Marx as a growing proportion of "dead" to "living labor"); the degree to which a machine "saves labor" is considered then a measure of its productivity. The resulting investments for machinery and raw materials relative to investments for labor-power (a rise in the "organic composition of capital," in marxian terms) means that less value is extracted from the labor force for any given amount of capital invested. This, in turn, means that the benefits accruing to particular capitalists from a rise in productivity bring simultaneously a *relative* decline in the *source* of profit for the capitalist system: a relative decline, that is, in capital invested in wages of workers that produce surplus-value (variable capital). As long as these contradictory effects of increased productivity (decline in the rate of profit vs. increase in the rate of surplus-value) are resolved in favor of profitability—i.e., as long as the *total* increase in the mass of surplus-value is sufficient to offset the *relative* decline of variable capital (that portion of invested capital that produces surplus-value), accumulation can continue.

This favorable profit-situation occurs in times of rapid growth in overall investments. In these periods, a growing productive base incorporates a sufficient increase in the labor-force to offset the relative decline of variable capital that results from the increasing mechanization of production. Such an expansion of the productive base both generates an increase in productivity (since it provides capitalists with the profits necessary to further modernize their plants) and presupposes it (since, as we have seen, profits yielded by increased productivity provide the basis for further capital accumulation). As an industry grows, however, more and more surplus-value is required for reinvestment and expansion. If the decline of value produced relative to capital invested does not allow for a sufficient total increase in the mass of surplus-value to cover the rising costs of expansion, then continued accumulation is threatened.

One way that an individual capitalist with a "capital shortage" (due to insufficient profits) can amass the surplus-value needed to modernize, is by merging with other enterprises. By pooling their surplus-value, merging companies may have enough to expand and modernize. If this is to be successful, the advantages of an increased scale of production and centralization of management must lead to sufficient increases in productivity to reverse the situation which brought on the profit-crisis (i.e., they must allow the mass of surplus-value to increase enough to offset the relative decline in living labor). Thus, mergers between producers allow the concentration of capital into larger units, more capable of absorbing a devaluation of non-competitive facilities, and of attracting enough additional capital investment to render them competitive again. In this way, mergers reduce the threat which devaluation (of old investments by more modern competition) poses to smaller companies. Merging is one of the first moves taken in capitalism to avert uncontrolled devaluation (i.e., bankruptcies) and to reestablish the basis for accumulation. Because a newly merged bloc of capital must continue to accumulate and invest in new labor-saving technology, it still is subject to the recurrence of the same contradictions in the long run. When the disruption of the accumulation process becomes generalized, widespread crisis ensues: companies fail, plants lay idle, masses of workers are thrown out of work.

Various measures (called by Marx "counter-tendencies" to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall) can counteract and delay the severe crises that result from the decline in surplus-value extraction. For example, labor costs can be reduced by lowering wages (an increase in the rate of exploitation). Like productivity increases, this has the effect of augmenting the proportion of value that falls to the capitalist. A rise in the rate of surplus-value can also be obtained by an intensification of labor, commonly known as speedups.

All such measures, however, have their limits—workers can only be paid so much less, and made to work so much more, before their willingness and/or ability to produce is jeopardized. The counter-tendencies are brakes that capitalists apply to their enterprises to stall the "natural" progression of the boom/bust cycle. The limited success of these "brakes" is born out by history, in which capitalism has repeatedly entered crises.

Once in crisis, the actual "cure" for capitalist production can only occur when a sufficient increase in the creation of surplus-value has restored profitability and enabled a renewal of accumulation on an increased scale. The "classical" way out of a generalized capitalist crisis is accomplished by the massive devaluation or destruction of less-productive capital in favor of the increased concentration and centralization of the strongest (i.e., most-productive) capitals. This means that investments in constant capital are liquidated, and their former value lost, as, for example, when firms go bankrupt. The greater the concentration and centralization of capital already existing at the time of crisis, the more devastating are the consequences of devaluation for the economy as a whole; since the firms to be liquidated are already huge, their failures have severe repercussions throughout society.

The companies that survive can acquire the assets of ruined firms below their value, and/or gain increased shares of the market. The new structure of capital that emerges from this process has a reduced composition, since the plant acquired costs less, while the number of workers, and the value they produce, remain the same. In other words, for the given amount of capital needed to resume the accumulation process, there is a relative decline in investment costs for plant and raw material in proportion to investments for labor-power. Survivors thus benefit from an increased rate of profit. The resulting increase of surplus-value at the disposal of fewer capitalists must be reinvested in new productive technology and a renewed cycle of accumulation can begin.

In terms of the actual production of surplus-value, those industries with the highest composition of capital are the least profitable. In a free-market context, however, varying profit-rates are "averaged" through competition, with the proportion of surplus-value falling to each particular capital determined by its volume in relation to the total social capital. The imbalance between sectors of varying compositions is also offset by such mechanisms as monopoly pricing and state-intervention, which transfer surplus-value from greater- to lesser- or even unprofitable sectors. Monopoly pricing enables producers to sell their products at prices above their values, thereby obtaining a satisfactory rate of return, regardless of the efficiency of their production. But the surplus-value gained in this fashion is not created by the monopolists; it is drawn indirectly (through the market) from other sectors of production.

The state (which does not *create* value, since that is only done in production) transfers value by taxing profits from one sector and passing it on by means of various direct or indirect subsidies. In the era of state-intervention, the "natural" tendency toward crisis is thus contained by a redistribution of the surplus-value available in the economy as a whole (the total social surplus-value). The transfer of value to ailing sectors, however, does not *reverse* the crisis tendency. In itself, state management of the economy cannot create the surplus-value needed for a renewal of accumulation.

State regulation of the total pool of surplus-value, like debt expansion, merely buys time for capitalists to reorganize their industry in such a way as to increase surplus-value sufficiently—the only capitalist solution to the crisis (and a temporary one, at that). When the economy as a whole is afflicted by crisis (i.e., when the total pool of surplus-value is unsufficient for continued accumulation), redistribution becomes increasingly difficult to manage, and state-intervention as even a temporary recourse for capital becomes increasingly untenable.

* * *

The organic composition in the steel industry ranks among the highest (along with such industries as oil, chemicals, and nuclear power), and is continually increasing. During the decade 1968-78, total assets per employee (an indication of organic composition, though not a precise equivalent) in the steel industry more than doubled (from $40,010 to $84,320 in assets per employee), for a real increase after inflation of 21 percent.(7)

At this juncture in the history of world steel production, the industry has proven unable to generate enough net profits to meet its own modernization needs (estimated to be an annual $4 billion in the US alone),(8) and has been unable to attract adequate investment capital from other profitable sectors to continue expansion. In the US, despite "the government's program for steel—the so-called Soloman plan—which has contributed substantially to the economic recovery of the steel industry, . . . the industry's earnings are still far short of the amount of capital necessary to modernize existing facilities, much less to expand capacity."(9)

A new plant costs $1,000 a ton, and "the investment contemplated is so massive and the risk on the total financial viability of that company so great that it would require prudent judgment before proceeding," said David Roderick, Chairman of US Steel Corporation.(10) A "greenfield" plant (built from scratch) in the US can cost up to 80 percent of the net worth of a "Top Ten" steel producer. US Steel's recently scrapped plan to build a new integrated plant at Conneaut, Ohio was expected to cost approximately $6 billion.(11)

According to a recent study by the President's Council on Wage and Price Stability, the heavy capital charges at a greenfield plant would now exceed whatever savings in production costs are possible.(12) In other words, the lowering of production costs made possible by the latest technology no longer provides enough additional profit to pay invested capital at a rate competitive with other investments.

This problem in the US led to a 3 percent reduction in steel plant capacity in 1977, after which the largest American producer, US Steel, announced a 10 percent reduction of its steel operations in 1979, entailing layoffs of 13,000.(13) In Great Britain, where 50 plants have already been closed over the past two years, the British Steel Corporation announced additional closures resulting in layoffs in 1979 of 15,000.(14)

In the Third World steel production has found lower labor costs, no environmental controls, close raw materials, and access to water transportation. Despite these favorable conditions and the fact that recent expansion has been rapid, "developing countries are becoming hesitant about starting major steel projects now; . . . the cost of a greenfield steel project is so big that it makes the country planning it think twice," said William Jaffe of the World Bank.(16) This has resulted in significant cutbacks in planned capacity additions. Clearly then, the steel industry worldwide has reached a threshold where its ability to accumulate capital as a sector has been seriously disrupted.

Although steel industry profits and production levels as a whole have suffered, the consequences have been particularly severe for US and EEC companies with the most obsolete plants. The steel industry is composed of various blocs of capital, both privately held and nationalized, that compete for shares of the world steel market. Steel ownership is largely concentrated within each nation, so that competition in general coincides with economic competition between nation-states, although in the case of the EEC, steel producing nations have joined to form a regional economic bloc. The level of competition

hinges primarily on the relative cost-efficiency and productivity of individual steel companies and nationalized steel industries, whose positions reflect their labor costs, costs of raw materials and transportation, and degrees of technical modernity. While labor, raw materials, and transportation costs affect relative competitiveness, it is the drive for technological advantage that has played the most fundamental role in international steel competition. This is particularly true since the most modern, technologically advanced facilities have also been constructed with greater consideration for changes in transportation and pollution-control costs. Thus, for example, new Japanese steel complexes are more productive, closer to cheaper water transportation, and designed with anti-pollution equipment.

* * *

The dynamics of competition and the role of modernization can be seen more clearly in a brief history of steel production since WWII. Based on the long-used technology of the open-hearth furnace (some US firms still use open-hearth furnaces, though these comprise the majority of recent and impending shutdowns), American steel production constituted more than 60 percent of world steel production in 1946,(16) as it had emerged unscathed from the war, while Europe and Japan had suffered widespread destruction of their plants. The US advantage in productive capacity and then-modern facilities was obtained through state expenditures by the War Assets Administration, which spent $770 million to build steel plants for war production. At the end of the war it turned over these plants to their war-time managers, the largest steel companies.(17) Bolstered by such state subsidies, the American steel industry, led by the monolithic US Steel (known as "The Corporation"), easily dominated world steel markets. Oligopolistic price control allowed the American steel industry to obtain surplus-value created in other more competitive sectors (which could not control their own prices) and, thus, to show profits in excess of the surplus-value it generated. This went on until US-funded rebuilding efforts, particularly in Japan, began to yield lower-cost, higher-productivity steel production methods in the late 1950s. These methods, namely the Basic Oxygen Furnace (BOF) and later the electric arc furnace (followed even later by continuous casting and cold-rolling), brought increasing amounts of high-quality steel onto world markets by the mid-sixties, at lower prices than the oligopolistic US industry was able to offer.

Largely because it is so much faster, the BOF requires about 20 percent of the labor-power required by the open-hearth method of production. An open-hearth furnace requires 9-10 hours to process a load of steel; the BOF needs only 45 minutes.(18) The electric arc furnace provides a similarly dramatic improvement in productive efficiency. The chart demonstrates the progress of technological advancement in steel in six countries from 1965 to 1976.(19)

Since the mid-sixties, Japan and the EEC have developed into major steel producers, with production levels close to US figures. They have consistently been able to undercut US prices internationally, with ensuing sales contributing to the further development of European and

Production by Process, 1965-76

	Percentage of Production	1965	1970	1976	Total Production, 1976 (million metric tons)
USA	OHF	71%	36%	18 %	
	BOF	18%	48%	62 %	116.120
	EAF	11%	15%	19 %	
Japan	OHF	24%	4%	0.5%	
	BOF	54%	79%	81 %	107.399
	EAF	20%	16%	18 %	
West Germany	OHF	43%	26%	14 %	
	BOF	19%	55%	72 %	42.415
	EAF	8%	10%	13 %	
	Bess.	29%	9%	0 %	
France	OHF	24%	18%	6 %	
	BOF	13%	28%	68 %	23.221
	EAF	9%	11%	14 %	
	Bess.	51%	41%	11 %	
UK	OHF	63%	47%	17 %	
	BOF	17%	32%	51 %	22.274
	EAF	12%	10%	30 %	
Italy	OHF	40%	27%	8 %	
	BOF	22%	31%	46 %	23.447
	EAF	37%	40%	46 %	

OHF = open-hearth furnace
BOF = basic oxygen furnace
EAF = electric arc furnace
Bess. = Bessemer processor method

This chart shows the rapid development of the Basic Oxygen Furnace in six industrialized countries, and the corresponding abandonment of the open-hearth and nineteenth-century Bessemer processor methods. Japan's technological edge is clearly portrayed in that they have had a significantly higher percentage of steel produced by the BOF process. Japan jettisoned its costly and inefficient open-hearth furnaces while, as the chart shows, the US and European producers were still getting one-fifth to one-sixth of their production from obsolete open-hearths and Bessemer processors. Italy, with over 90 percent of its steel produced by modern methods, is relatively strong on international markets and is the only European producer to have avoided substantial cutbacks in the current crisis.

Japanese steel. The ability to sell at lower prices does not indicate a significantly more active state subsidy program in Japan, West Germany, or Italy. After all, the US government has for years been supporting the American steel industry through tax breaks, government contracts, non-prosecution of anti-trust legislation, and outright plant giveaways. Rather, their lower prices reflect a real lowering of costs and increases in productivity resulting primarily from new technology. The largest and oldest steel producers in Europe (UK, West Germany, and France) can be seen to have moved to the newer technology at about the same pace as the US. Their severe crisis of the 1970s reflects the fact that their move came too late to meet the challenge of Japanese competition.

At the forefront in implementing the BOF process, the Japanese have achieved an enormous increase in productive capacity as a result of their successful competition

Obsolete open-hearth furnace steel mill at Torrance, California—shut down November 1979.

in US, European, and Third World markets. Although it has technological and cost advantages, Japan lacks natural resources and hence became the most involved in Third World steel development. As of 1974, the five largest Japanese steelmakers had interests ranging from 5 to 90 percent in 32 plants in 17 countries throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America; and this involvement has increased since then.(20)

But as the largest exporter of steel, Japan is also the most vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the world market. A closely linked market means that even the most competitive producers suffer in a stagnating economy, and so Japan, too, is feeling the pressure of the crisis. Revision after revision of projected steel growth by the Minister of International Trade corresponded to a 40 percent decline in investment in 1976-77, and postponement of major repairs.(21) President Makita of Nippon Steel (the world's largest single steel company) speculated in October 1978 that "quantitative growth is coming to an end."(22)

The steel industry's structural particularities (high costs of machinery, the dynamic between technological advance and international competition), in conjuncture with the global economic slowdown, which has dampened demand for steel and tightened supply of investment capital, have required a massive rehauling of the steel industry. The consequences have been drastic—abrupt curtailment of expansion plans accompanied by a wave of shutdowns of obsolete plants in an attempt to rationalize production and restore profitability. The role of the nation-state in this process demonstrates an aspect of the fundamental contradictions of capitalist accumulation.

* * *

"The ball is in the government's court" in assuring industry profitability, which is a prerequisite to making necessary major capital investments.

—Chairman of Republic Steel
Wall Street Journal, 14 December 1979

Loan guarantees carry with them indirect costs that are not immediately visible. If Wheeling can't borrow without putting up taxpayers' money as collateral, private capital markets are presumably channeling their funds into investments that are more profitable, less risky, or both. By diverting funds to Wheeling, the government is denying capital to other firms which could use it more efficiently.

—Editorial response to Wheeling-Pittsburg Steel Corporation's receipt of $150 million in guaranteed loans
Wall Street Journal, 14 September 1979

Seldom in history have nation-states been faced with such a difficult task—that of salvaging old investments in their domestic steel industries from the ravages of international competition, while permitting the capitalist "cure" (i.e., devaluation) to lift the industry out of its depressed condition. On one hand, it has become evident that the capital drain by unprofitable sectors cannot continue indefinitely. On the other hand, the process of elimination through international competition threatens a massive devaluation, which would have severe consequences in the economy as a whole. Failure of a large steel company would lead to huge debt defaults and disrupt financial markets; continuous plant closures and massive layoffs threaten social stability. Furthermore, because steel ownership is already largely concentrated within national boundaries, the economic aspect of steel production (steel as exchange-value) overlaps with military, strategic, and infrastructural considerations (steel as use-value). A strong national steel industry is an important source of power.

Under divergent pressures from the owners of steel, steelworkers and their unions, and economic and social considerations, national leaders are confronted with the task of "managing" the rationalization of steel so as to prevent serious disruptions while integrating domestic production into the new structure of capital imposed by international capitalist accumulation. A dialectical relationship is playing itself out between the interests of the

unfettered development of capital on a global scale (featuring mergers, international investments, and world trade organizations and agreements) and the national interests of bourgeois states. The immediate result of this dynamic is a (more or less rapid) rationalization process which involves further concentration and centralization of capital, and the beginnings of a new international division of labor.

In a general sense, government and capitalists pursue the same interest: the accumulation of capital. Their interests, however, diverge from the "most efficient" accumulation of capital whenever the government is forced to intercede in order to spare particular capitalist firms from bankruptcy and thereby guarantee the survival of unprofitable production. In its role as the regulator of the total national capital, the state replaces and/or complements private capital investment in the steel industry through stock purchases, direct payments, loan guarantees, and other forms of direct and indirect subsidy. The state's capital is drawn from the pool of surplus-value primarily through taxation (i.e., at the expense of more profitable industries and workers' paychecks). Most governments see the bail-out of their domestic producers as a temporary measure to restore long-run profitability.

In some cases, the state assumes direct control of non-competitive facilities. In France, for example, the state has bought the controlling interest in the largest companies in order to absorb the devaluation of the Bessemer processor plants. Its explicit plan is to increase the overall productivity of the industry by closing the most obsolete plants and concentrating capital in modern facilities. This would supposedly reintegrate French steel production into the world market (after years of lagging behind in competitiveness). It is hoped that the massive injection of capital necessary to fund shutdowns and modernization of the industry will eventually permit the industry's return to private ownership "once it returns to a decent profit."(23) Claude Etchegaray, applauded by leading industrialists for his "managing savvy," has been appointed to administer the restructuring plan. "The rationalization plan was conceived by me personally, and not dictated by the government," boasted Etchegaray in a recent interview.(24) The steel plan, however, is not the product of his own imagination, as it conforms to the guidelines of a plan agreed to under the auspices of the EEC, the Davignon plan.

The Davignon plan was produced by careful negotiations between steel producers and government officials of Western Europe under the pressure of declining profits, international competition, and shrinking markets. It constitutes an attempt to pool resources and centralize planning of steel production on a regional, rather than national, basis. The advantages of acting as an economic bloc strengthens the position of European producers vis-a-vis the US and Japan. By setting guidelines for EEC trade, quotas for national production and deliveries, minimum prices on imports, and export restraint agreements with the Third World, the EEC plan is intended to enable producers to raise capital for their beleaguered industries.(25)

This cooperative arrangement has favored the concentration and centralization of capital necessitated by the large scale and costs of production. In Germany, as a result of a number of mergers in recent years, there are now just a few large integrated German firms. "I believe a relatively large state of consolidation has been reached here and yes, I find that good," said Herbert Koehler, head of the German national steelowners association, in a recent interview.(26) In Sweden, "by the end of 1976, virtually every Swedish steelmaker was participating in merger or cooperation discussions aimed at streamlining the industry by product lines and maximizing production efficiencies."(27)

Through varying degrees of state intervention, this rationalization process prevents major bankruptcies of less-competitive capitals. While favoring the latter, such planning penalizes more-competitive firms like those in Italy, since they cannot reap the benefits of their productive edge:(28)

> The most vociferous criticism of the Davignon plan can be heard in the circles of Italy's Bresciani, whose small electric-furnace mills were the last to come to the market with a flexibility of operation that the older and bigger conglomerates do not possess. They also have been the hardest-hit targets of EEC sanctions for violations of minimum price rules.

Another important aspect of the rationalization of European steel production, which has been encouraged by the EEC and facilitated by concentration and centralization, is the streamlining of the industry by region and product line. In general, Europe's competitive strength lies in the specialized steel market. Correspondingly, the earlier, more labor-intensive and large-scale stages of steel production make the Third World, with its access to cheaper labor, transportation, and raw materials, more advantageous in this area. As a result, steelmakers in the advanced industrialized countries (particularly Japan and Germany) have partaken in joint ventures with Third World countries for the production of structural and semi-finished steel products. The international division of labor benefits industrialized countries, since the bulk of current profits in steel lies in finishing and producing high-technology grades of steel.(29)

The entrance of the new Third World producers into the stagnating global economy has heightened competitive pressures on steel facilities in the US and Europe. Internal demand for Third World steel production is seldom sufficient, since the capital investments needed to generate demand for steel are largely controlled by the US, Europe, and Japan. By means of this control of capital, through private banks and multilateral lending agencies like the IMF and World Bank, the developed blocs of capital have maintained a strong influence on the pace and nature of Third World steel development.(30)

A general capital shortage, and particularly the crisis in US and European steel, has led the World Bank to announce that it will no longer fund steel development projects whose economic viability depends on exports. Funding from other financial institutions linked to American and European interests can be expected to tighten up, which would lead to increased stagnation in Third World capacity additions.

Meanwhile, the flurry of mergers in the late 1960s and 1970s and the wave of plant closures in the past few years are good examples of capitalist rationalization at

work in the US.(31) As in Europe, the state has intervened significantly to allow an "orderly" process of concentration and centralization to take place without bankruptcies or plummeting sales due to competitive imports. The US government has helped steel producers raise capital by guaranteeing loans, and more recently with an original protectionist measure called "trigger pricing." This device allows continual increases in domestic steel prices by setting minimum prices on imports (8 percent above Japanese production costs), which "trigger" dumping investigations. Most recently, the US Treasury has raised trigger levels for 1980 by 5 percent, 4 percent more than Japanese costs have risen, according to Charles Bradford of Merrill, Lynch.(32) Already by mid-December 1979, most US steelowners had announced price increases for 1980. Commenting on this state-protectionism in mid-summer 1979, *American Metal Market* said, "The higher prices which have followed implementation of the trigger price system, plus investment tax credits, have *partially* closed the gap between the industry's cash flow and the $4 billion annual need for modernization and expansion."(33)

The recently announced shutdowns by US Steel, Jones & Laughlin, and other steel companies, and the scrapping of rebuilding and expansion plans by all large integrated steel producers make it clear that government protection is essentially allowing them to get their capital out of steel and into other, more profitable ventures.(34) This will eventually necessitate further and greater state intervention in steel production to reestablish past production levels and an internationally competitive industry, with necessary investment costs drawn from the general pool of social surplus-value (i.e., profits from other sectors).

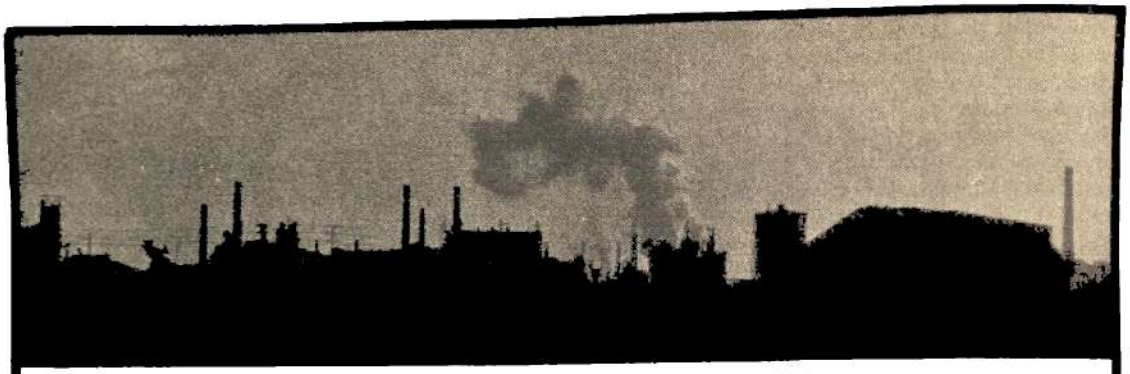
One of the first signs of increased state intervention appeared on 1 December 1979, when the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade began hearings on a multibillion dollar loan-guarantee program to help financially strapped steel companies build modern plants. This program was proposed to provide credit to "capital-heavy industries."(35) From the ranks of private steel capitalists, David Roderick, US Steel chairman, has recently spoken of the need for "a dialogue between government and industry and possibly some changes in existing antitrust legislation," specifically referring to the "need for a marked change of attitude within the bureaucracies concerning their concepts of competition in the marketplace."(36) The intent of this new loan-guarantee plan, barely concealed in Roderick's statements, is along the lines of several suggestions put forth to bail out the shutdown-plagued Mahoning Valley of Ohio. Reverend William Hogan, a steel industry analyst, has proposed the building of one large $500 million blast-furnace capable of producing 10,000 tons of steel per day. Under Hogan's proposal, the price tag for this heavily concentrated venture would be shared by the four steel companies that own 25-year-old blast-furnaces in the Mahoning Valley and the financing guaranteed by the government.(37)

The involvement of state interests, which are those of specific nations or regions in *opposition* to those of other nations or regions, prevents the capitalist growth dynamic in one sector (steel in this case) from achieving an effective international centralization of planning and distribution. This dynamic between state interests and capitalist "efficiency" on an international scale led Fiat's chairman, Giovanni Agnelli, to "wonder why we are not moving towards a concerted rationalization of the steel market. I wonder why we cannot try to avoid the risk of more severe crises and new nationalizations by seeking a reasonable international division of labor creating cooperation, orderly marketing, integration, and specialization, at least at regional levels."(38)

Farsighted capitalists like Agnelli see a stable global planning system as a goal to be reached through multilateral agreements. The tendency of states with less-competitive steel industries, however, is to bolster and protect their own *against* more efficient production from other parts of the world, while they restructure in an attempt to gain competitiveness on the world market. Even the Davignon plan is envisioned as "clearly a temporary and transitional scheme" that "can't last beyond a certain period of time." According to another article on the European plan "difficulties do not seem insurmountable *provided the grim economic outlook does not rekindle nationalistic strains and all-out competition for market shares.*" As Sheldon Wesson wrote over a year ago in *American Metal Market*,(39)

> The opinions of government and industry observers can be summarized in three main points:
>
> 1. The scaled-down expansion plans of the next few years will bring growing competitive pressures on the market.
> 2. Japanese and European pressures to sell will be rechanneled by the US trigger pricing system.
> 3. Americans who favor some sort of international market-carving mechanism may be encouraged by European and some Japanese advocacy of such a plan, but it is not going to happen.
>
> If there is no net capacity addition in the next 2-3 years in Japan and Europe, they will still be operating at 69-72% of capacity. 80% capacity usage is considered "breakeven" at current cost scales. Result: pressures to cut prices and push exports will remain and intensify.. The governments of Japan and the EEC will become increasingly involved in the steel industries through subsidies, nationalization, financing, and other forms of intervention. The marketplace problems will continue and intensify, which will put a strain on whatever future participation Japan and the EEC may seek in agreements to control international trade in steel.

As competition holds prices down internationally, all governments will have to intervene further to absorb the value-loss that is taking place as steel cannot regenerate itself. This results from the high ratio of capital invested in means of production to that invested in wages of workers, which has driven costs of renewal beyond the ability of the steel industry to produce that revenue *along with a competitive profit rate* for investors. Protectionism and state intervention can only transfer the stagnation and crisis in steel to other sectors and thereby exacerbate tensions between nations, as they vie for export markets in a stagnating world economy. As this stagnation and crisis become generalized throughout entire regional economies and the global economy itself, rising tensions may quite possibly lead, once again, to war. The only other option, *within capitalism*, is a successful "cartelization" of steel,



Modern integrated BOF furnaces at Kaiser Steel, Fontana, California: Site of over 1200 cost-cutting layoffs in 1979.

with new international oligopolistic pricing mechanisms to assure steel its share of surplus-value from other sectors. Given the dynamics of capitalism, this type of cooperation seems a remote possibility at best.

* * *

The call for state intervention does not originate solely from threatened capitalists, but also from trade unions and their supporters. Capitalists want state subsidies to prevent the devaluation of their capital by international competition, and trade unionists want to protect their own status and that of the workers they claim to represent by "saving jobs." In the event, while inevitably damaging unions in their traditional role as brokers of labor-power, the strategies undertaken to save the steel industry for capitalism have proven catastrophic for the masses of workers and their dependents whose former productive activity has been rendered "redundant" by international capitalist "development."

In the US, the steelworkers were at the forefront of the industry-based organizations that arose in the 1930s following the decline of craft-unionism (marked by the devastating defeat of AFL-organized workers in the Great Steel Strike of 1919). Even at the beginning, the new confrontational tactics discovered by workers in the course of their struggle (sit-ins) met with resistance from union leaders. In exchange for union recognition and the right to bargain collectively with management, the new institutions suppressed the very militancy that had given them strength in the first place.(40)

Once established as legal defenders of particular groups of wage-laborers within the framework of capitalist production, the new industrial unions did provide leverage for steelworkers to gain a larger share of the benefits of an expanding industry. Throughout the US and the EEC, unionized steelworkers earn better wages and benefits than most other workers; but, behind an increase in wages we can usually find increases in profits and productivity. The effectiveness of union wage-pushes is limited by the profit requirements of the company/industry. Increases in wages must not threaten profit margins and are often gained at the expense of job security and working conditions. In the US, for example, under the guise of a "Human Relations Committee," United Steelworkers of America secretly bargained away control over work rules in exchange for wage/benefit increases. This tradeoff allowed an increase in productivity of 4 percent per annum (1960-66) through speedups.(41)

When an industry is no longer expanding at a sufficient rate to employ an increased number of workers, wage increases tend to be accompanied by layoffs. The real wage increases bargained by the unions for employed steelworkers since 1968 were gotten at the expense of the more than 100,000 workers who lost their jobs in the meantime.(42) The cost of wage increases to steel-owners was thus partially offset by an absolute decline in wage-workers. For the industry as a whole, real total employment costs (after inflation) have risen by 30 percent since 1968. At first sight, this seems to support the view that wage increases are a major cause of capitalist crises.(43) Total employment costs, however, rose at a rate 75 percent *slower* than costs for "materials, supplies, freight, and other services." In fact, the ratio of labor costs to costs of "materials, supplies, etc." has changed from 33 percent/48 percent to 35 percent/57 percent, indicating that the main cause of the crisis for steel-owners does not lie in labor costs, or in "excessive" success of workers in the wage bargain.(44)

The union's role is only to defend workers as wage-laborers. When the economy is in recession or depression and can no longer afford even to maintain former standards, little can be gained in increased wages and benefits. The union, based on the status quo (i.e., capitalist production relations) will accept austerity for the sake of the nation, or to save the company, without seriously challenging the capitalist organization of production, which demands austerity. The current crisis in the steel industry worldwide has severely undermined the unions' ability to defend even their already greatly reduced ranks. Demands merely for the maintenance of real wages in the face of rampant inflation are met with open threats of massive layoffs. When the issue becomes saving jobs, the unions are caught in a double bind. Massive layoffs are, as we have seen, vital to the survival of the industry which provides jobs in the first place. But since the union's niche and power in capitalist reality depend on its business-agent role for these jobs, it must try to defend them.

Struggling against the implementation of new technology because of its consequences for employment and workers' control on the shop floor is a complicated matter. The class struggle unfolds over technological change. Yet

the limits of what a particular group of workers can do, within capitalism, are quickly reached in times of crisis. Except in certain cases where profit margins are substantial (e.g., the oil industry, due to its oligopolistic price control) firms that fail to cut costs (i.e., save labor) risk being forced out of the market altogether. The dilemma between a wage-cut or layoffs is poignantly illustrated by the recent case of US Steel's American Bridge Division. Workers at the division's three plants in Gary, Indiana; Ambridge, Pennsylvania; and Schiffler, Pennsylvania, were confronted with an ultimatum by US Steel: take a three-year wage freeze and be eliminated from the protection of the Basic Steel Contract, or else the three plants will be closed. Workers first voted against acceptance, and US Steel promptly announced the closure of the Ambridge and Schiffler plants (the Gary plant to remain open). Within a couple of days workers were circulating petitions at the closing plants to take a new vote. One hour after the Ambridge and Schiffler steelworkers agreed to the wage-freeze and other conditions, US Steel announced that those two plants would remain open and the Gary plant would close.

Although a national steel strike in the US might have gained different results for the blackmailed workers, militant resistance by steelworkers in France and England has failed to prevent widespread closures. While British steelworkers successfully prevented the closing of the furnaces at Shotton, North Wales for seven years, their resistance ended in November 1979, and the furnaces were shut down by early 1980. The attempt by workers to halt technological development in order to save jobs, or maintain shop-floor control, can at best be a short-term strategy since the world market continuously reorganizes socially-necessary labor.

As long as production and exchange are ruled by the extraction of surplus-value, technological change will be a source of both greater wealth and greater human misery, with the benefits of increased productivity falling to the capitalists, and unemployment and hardship for displaced workers. On the other hand, in a world where production is governed by the needs and desires of the global community, labor-saving technology, by reducing the time and energy which must be devoted to fulfilling basic social needs, will free time and energy for what Marx termed the "all-sided development of the individual."

The call for self-management or community ownership of threatened plants, proposed by such social democrats as Gar Alperovitz and the editors of *In These Times* for Youngstown Sheet & Tube plants shut down in 1977, is not even tenable in the short term. Although workers and community members could surely run the plants more safely and efficiently themselves, the problems leading to shutdowns are not merely a consequence of corporate "mismanagement." In such cases, workers are up against not only the will of their employers, or even the nation's administrators, but also the constraints of the world market itself. If multi-billion-dollar corporations like Lykes and US Steel are phasing out non-competitive production, how can a community of 30,000 like Youngstown find the funds necessary to modernize obsolete facilities enough to keep them open? Even if subsidized by the federal government, the competitive pressures of the world market make their long-term survival highly unlikely.

Participation in management by "workers" (i.e., by union officials, as has been implemented in West Germany and demanded by UAW president Fraser in the US and by the "progressive" CFDT in France) can only mean participation in the exploitation of workers. "Socialism in one company" is a great hoax of the "progressive" bourgeoisie; for the company manages its managers, and the world market manages the company. The German leaders, whose success story has been lauded as a fine model of economic management for other western economies to emulate, congratulate themselves for having accomplished their rationalization plans without major social upheaval. The almost unequalled labor peace in that country does owe much to the unions' participation in economic management, since their acceptance of responsibility for capitalist success guarantees their support in helping to suppress militancy. The stability of German society is also a consequence of its relative prosperity.

In a relatively weak economy such as England's, however, workers have already seen their real wages eroded by rampant inflation. The British Steel Corporation's recently announced intention to further reduce its labor force by an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 in the next few years and to impose a declining real wage on steelworkers precipitated a national steel strike in January 1980.(46) Directed by the 90,000-strong Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (England's traditionally most moderate union), this strike has not (by mid-January) broken through the barriers of union tactics and demands, with the exception of a few flying pickets.

While such defensive struggles are important in the immediate bread-and-butter sense, their impotence at stemming the tide of capitalist restructuring will become more apparent as the economic crisis intensifies and becomes more generalized, which will necessitate the generalization of workers' struggles. Wage-cuts and layoffs in steel today are precursors to similar occurrences in auto, coal, rubber, and other key sectors tomorrow. Because it channels militancy into dead-end battles, because it divides the working-class and exacerbates its geographic vulnerability, because it inhibits class-wide support, trade-union ideology and practice is a major stumbling block for revolutionary change. Nevertheless, at this point in history, it is foolish and unrealistic to expect steelworkers to enter into struggle with a call for world revolution, though in fact they will have to start thinking and acting in this direction to address their predicament adequately. Capital remains relatively resilient and mobile (though its room to move is certainly shrinking), and the working class is divided with no social movement to turn to.

While this does not mean that steelworkers have nothing to do but sit back and take it, the best they can hope for, until they can make common cause with other workers and spread the fight, is a good pension/severance deal. They should hold no illusions about the future of their jobs, nor should they accept promises on the basis of future prosperity. They can fight for more than the pittance they will be offered, by aggressive actions such as those carried out by French steelworkers, and force the state to pay. Undoubtedly this will require a degree of militancy which the unions will attempt to thwart. Workers should be prepared for this and not rely on the unions to do their fighting for them. This means organizing *outside* of

the unions and attempting to develop an international solidarity and unification of workers in general. An international and trans-industrial movement of workers is required for the creation of a new world, the only real *solution* to the crises of capitalist society.

* * *

Since we completed this article in January 1980, there have been some significant developments in the international steel picture which lend further credence to our analysis. Of primary importance is the increased likelihood of an open trade war in response to US Steel's filing "anti-dumping" complaints against steel companies in seven European countries. While tensions in the international steel trade are perhaps the most pronounced right now, protectionist pressures are also appearing on both sides of the Atlantic with respect to the manufacturing of televisions, automobiles, synthetic fibers, nuts and bolts, and other goods. While no major American steel firms have yet joined the complaints, several have submitted supporting evidence, and US Steel is still planning to expand its anti-dumping charges to include Japan and some Third World countries. After vigorously trying to dissuade US Steel from filing these charges, the US government has responded by making good its threat to suspend the trigger-pricing mechanism. The Commerce Department, after initial examination of the evidence, has found "sufficient basis" to pursue the anti-dumping investigation. The Justice Department, on the other hand, has publicly declared its belief that the domestic steel industry has no grounds for its complaint, and it has called for the dropping of charges in favor of free trade. After months of investigation, the Commerce Department might find the dumping charges legitimate. If so, this could close the US market to foreign steel companies, and that, in turn, could lead to an all-out trade war with its ominous implications for peace.

Fully supporting all efforts to protect the domestic industry, the United Steelworkers of America (USA) has just agreed (a few hours before the contract would have been submitted to binding arbitration under the provisions of the Experimental Negotiating Agreement) to a new three-year contract. An unnamed USA negotiator aptly characterized the union's attitude toward the bargaining effort: "We were determined not to do violence to the industry as an institution."(46) The agreement, covering some 400,000 workers, will increase labor costs by about 34.5 percent over the three-year life of the contract, assuming a 10 percent inflation rate. The contract, widely hailed as "moderate" and "reasonable," gives up COLA-parity with the similarly beleaguered auto and rubber workers, and diverts the May 1st COLA payment toward financing pension payments.

An important development in American steel labor relations is also included in the latest contract: the establishment of "labor-management participation teams." By addressing problems such as production efficiency, product quality, safety and health, employee morale, absenteeism, and how foremen deal with workers, these teams are supposed to make steel jobs "more meaningful for workers and more productive for companies." As such co-participation efforts are old hat in Europe, their purpose is widely discussed in the business press: "If workers learn to manage themselves better, they take over management functions . . . and cut administrative costs for employers."(47)

Steelworkers from Youngstown, Ohio briefly occupied US Steel corporate headquarters in Pittsburgh last December. They demanded that management quote them a price for the shut-down Youngstown works. They also relied on the legal system to uphold what they claim was a verbal agreement to keep the plant open "as long as it makes a profit." US Steel easily defended their decision to shut down the plant in court.

After thirteen bitter weeks, the steelworkers at the British Steel Corporation (BSC) ended the longest national strike in England since 1945. The settlement provides an 11 percent, across-the-board, wage increase (up from the initial 2 percent offer, but considerably short of the inflation rate of more than 18 percent) with an additional 5 percent tied to productivity deals. The union leadership (Bill Sirs and staff of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation)

British steelworkers demonstrate.

played the class-collaborationist role to the extreme. First, they delayed expanding the strike to private steel firms, which account for nearly half the steel manufacturing in England. Eventually they yielded to rank and file pressure and called for an extension of the strike to private firms; but even then, they freely granted exemptions to firms in allegedly poor financial shape and encouraged steelworkers to remain on the job (which they did at the higher-paid Sheerness and Hadfield steel companies). The Trades Union Congress (TUC; the British counterpart to the AFL-CIO) delayed official sanctions of steelworkers' picket lines, blocked calls for a general strike, and ordered workers to heed court injunctions against secondary picketing. The strike did see several uncontrolled outbursts of frustration and anger by more militant rank-and-file steelworkers, including the occupation and ransacking of BSC offices at Sheerness, violent clashes between pickets and

police throughout the UK, and the mauling of contract negotiators after they completed the deal.(48)

> Shouting "sellout, sellout," pickets who had been waiting for the results of the executive committee's vote charged the meeting room and kicked, mauled and spat upon the committee members as they filed out. Most of the pickets came from Yorkshire and South Wales, where tens of thousands of steelworkers face layoffs as part of BSC's latest restructuring effort.

In neither the new American, nor the British steel contract are any provisions made for the protection of jobs.

Chris Carlsson and Caitlin Manning
May 1980

Notes

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5. Wall Street Journal (WSJ), 16 July 1979 and 12 December 1979.
6. For a critique of Keynesianism and neo-Marxist economists as well as a discussion of the role of state intervention in capitalist crises, see Paul Mattick, Marx and Keynes: The Limits of the Mixed Economy (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1969).
7. American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI), Annual Statistical Report (Washington, DC: AISI, 1978).
8. Estimate of Republic Steel chairman Delancey, WSJ, 14 December 1979.
9. Quoted from the report of Carter's tri-partite committee for steel, AMM, 27 June 1979.
10. David Roderick, quoted by Tom Stundza, "Roderick: Climate Needed to Stimulate Investment," AMM ISS, 11 October 1979.
11. Ibid.
12. Fortune, 13 February 1978.
13. New York Times (NYT), 28 November 1979.
14. WSJ, 19 March 1979, 16 July 1979, and 21 November 1979.
15. Linda Stern, "World Bank Financing Changes for New Steel Mood," AMM ISS, 11 October 1979.
16. AISI, op. cit. various years.
17. An example of how these plants were sold at a fraction of their cost can be found in Geneva, Utah. In 1942-43, at a cost of $101.2 million, the US government constructed an integrated steel plant, then turned around and sold it in June 1946 for $40 million to US Steel. It can thus be seen that government involvement in steel has been instrumental in assuring production for a long time. See Helen Shapiro and Steven Volk, "Steelyard Blues: New Structures in Steel," NACLA Report on the Americas 12(1): 5, 1979.
18. US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Technological Change and Manpower Trends in Five Industries, BLS Bulletin no. 1856 (Washington, DC: USGPO), p. 22.
19. Based on IISI, op. cit.
20. NYT, 5 January 1979.
21. "Japanese Goal Reduced," AMM ISS, 7 October 1977.
22. AMM ISS, 3 October 1978.
23. "Etchegaray: Managing Savvy Key to Survival," AMM ISS, 3 October 1978.
24. Ibid.
25. Eugene Dimaria, "Davignon Plan: It's Working," AMM ISS, 11 October 1979.
26. Peters, op. cit.
27. "Swedish Optimism Dims," AMM ISS, 11 October 1979.
28. Dimaria, op. cit.
29. Shapiro and Volk, op. cit.
30. Brazil, which has the largest and fastest growing steel industry in the Third World, had in 1978 a gross foreign debt of $40 billion with $8 billion due in annual interest and amortization payments.
31. The 1978 merger of the Lykes Corporation with Ling-Temco-Vought provides perhaps the best among many examples. This conglomerate—which is in turn the product of the 1968 mergers of the eighth largest steelmaker, Youngstown Sheet and Tube, into cash-hungry Lykes and of the seventh largest, Jones and Laughlin, into LTV—owns J&L, now the third largest American producer after US Steel and Bethlehem.
32. WSJ, 21 November 1979.
33. AMM, 27 June 1979.
34. For more on this see Shapiro and Volk, op. cit.
35. NYT, 30 November 1979.
36. Roderick, quoted by Stundza, op. cit.
37. NYT, 13 October 1977.
38. "Guest Executive Comments," AMM, 4 November 1977.
39. AMM, 9 June 1978.
40. For further reading on the role of industrial unionism in the US, see Jeremy Brecher, Strike! (San Francisco: Straight Arrow, 1974) and Elizabeth Jones, "CIO: Reform to Reaction," Root & Branch 6, 1978.
41. Richard Betheil, "The ENA in Perspective: The Transformation of Collective Bargaining in the Basic Steel Industry," Review of Radical Political Economics 10(2), 1978.
42. Inflation for 1968-78 was calculated at 98 percent (according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics), while payroll costs per man-hour have increased by 153 percent (according to AISI, op. cit., 1978).
43. For a critique of "class struggle" and "wage-push" theories of capitalist crisis, see Ron Rothbart, "The Limits of Mattick's Economy," Red-Eye 1, 1979.
44. AISI, op. cit., 1978.
45. WSJ, 10 December 1979.
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48. San Francisco Chronicle, 2 April 1980.

中国

Place Names

Following are names of municipalities, provinces, autonomous regions and well-known cities spelled in the Pinyin system. In parentheses, for reference, are the conventional forms.

Municipalities

Beijing (Peking) *
Shanghai (Shanghai)
Tianjin (Tientsin)

Provinces and selected cities

1 **Anhui** (Anhwei)
Hefei (Hofei)
Bengbu (Pengpu)

2 **Fujian** (Fukien)
Fuzhou (Foochow)
Xiamen (Amoy)

3 **Gansu** (Kansu)
Lanzhou (Lanchow)

4 **Guangdong** (Kwangtung)
Guangzhou (Canton) *
Shantou (Swatow)

5 **Guizhou** (Kweichow)
Guiyang (Kweiyang)
Zunyi (Tsunyi)

6 **Hebei** (Hopei)
Shijiazhuang (Shihkiachwang)
Tangshan (Tangshan)

7 **Heilongjiang** (Heilungkiang)
Harbin (Harbin)
Daqing Oilfield (Taching)
Qiqihar (Tsitsihar)

8 **Henan** (Honan)
Zhengzhou (Chengchow)
Luoyang (Loyang)
Kaifeng (Kaifeng)

9 **Hubei** (Hupeh)
Wuhan (Wuhan)

10 **Hunan** (Hunan)
Changsha (Changsha)

11 **Jiangsu** (Kiangsu)
Nanjing (Nanking)
Suzhou (Soochow)
Wuxi (Wusi)

12 **Jiangxi** (Kiangsi)
Nanchang (Nanchang)
Jiujiang (Kiukiang)

13 **Jilin** (Kirin)
Changchun (Changchun)

14 **Liaoning** (Liaoning)
Shenyang (Shenyang)
Anshan (Anshan)
Luda (Luta)

15 **Qinghai** (Chinghai)
Xining (Sining)

16 **Shaanxi** (Shensi)
Xian (Sian)
Yanan (Yenan)

17 **Shandong** (Shantung)
Jinan (Tsinan)
Qingdao (Tsingtao)
Yantai (Yentai)

18 **Shanxi** (Shansi)
Taiyuan (Taiyuan)

19 **Sichuan** (Szechwan)
Chengdu (Chengtu)
Chongqing (Chungking)

20 **Yunnan** (Yunnan)
Kunming (Kunming)
Dali (Tali)

21 **Zhejiang** (Chekiang)
Hangzhou (Hangchow)

Autonomous regions

22 **Guangxi Zhuang** (Kwangsi Chuang)
Nanning (Nanning)
Guilin (Kweilin)

23 **Nei Monggol** (Inner Mongolia) *
Hohhot (Huhehot)
Baotou (Paotow)

24 **Ningxia Hui** (Ningsia Hui)
Yinchuan (Yinchwan)

25 **Xinjiang Uygur** (Sinkiang Uighur)
Urumqi (Urumchi)

26 **Xizang** (Tibet) *
Lhasa (Lhasa)

Party Leaders

Following are names of leading Chinese political figures spelled in the Pinyin system. In parentheses, for reference, are the spellings in a modified Wade-Giles system.

Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party

Hua Guofeng (Hua Kuo-feng)

Deputy Chairmen

Chen Yun (Chen Yun)
Deng Xiaoping (Teng Hsiao-ping)
Li Xiannian (Li Hsien-nien)
Wang Dongxing (Wang Tung-hsing)
Ye Jianying (Yeh Chien-ying)

Members of the Politburo

Chen Xilian (Chen Hsi-lien)
Chen Yonggui (Chen Yung-kuei)
Chen Yun (Chen Yun)
Deng Xiaoping (Teng Hsiao-ping)
Deng Yingchao (Teng Ying-chao)
Fang Yi (Fang Yi)
Geng Biao (Keng Piao)
Hu Yaobang (Hu Yao-pang)
Hua Guofeng (Hua Kuo-feng)
Ji Dengkui (Chi Teng-kuei)
Li Desheng (Li Teh-sheng)
Li Xiannian (Li Hsien-nien)
Liu Bocheng (Liu Po-cheng)
Ni Zhifu (Ni Chih-fu)
Nie Rongzhen (Nieh Jung-chen)
Peng Chong (Peng Chung)
Su Zhenhua (Su Chen-hua)
Ulanhu (Ulanfu)
Wang Dongxing (Wang Tung-hsing)
Wang Zhen (Wang Chen)
Wei Guoqing (Wei Kuo-ching)
Wu De (Wu Teh)
Xu Shiyou (Hsu Shih-yu)
Xu Xiangqian (Hsu Hsiang-chien)
Ye Jianying (Yeh Chien-ying)
Yu Qiuli (Yu Chiu-li)
Zhang Tingfa (Chang Ting-fa)

Alternate Members

Chen Muhua (Chen Mu-hua)
Seypidin (Saifudin),
Zhao Ziyang (Chao Tzu-yang)

LET A DOZEN FLOWERS BLOOM: The Beijing Free Speech Movement, 1978-79

China's hesitant experiment in "liberalization" is apparently over. After a year of alternately tolerating and restraining public criticism, the Party bureaucracy has finally opted for complete suppression of dissent. New restrictions have been placed on the airing of grievances through wall posters—anyone who wants to put up a poster must now register with the police—and if the latest rumors from Beijing prove accurate, the right to post criticisms of the leaders will soon be abolished entirely. Demonstrations have already been banned, and the underground press is all but extinct. One of the most outspoken and articulate of the Party's critics, Wei Jingsheng, has been sentenced to fifteen years in prison. For the present, all dissident voices have been silenced.(1)

Although the "democratic movement" led a short and insecure life, and is not likely to be resurrected in the near future, it should not be simply forgotten. There is much to be learned—about Chinese politics, about the realities of daily life in the People's Republic—from a close study of the emergence and brief history of the "Beijing Spring." The following pages will attempt a preliminary summing-up of the current human rights movement in China: its origins, its ideas, its limitations.

The movement arose from a unique conjuncture of historical circumstances and trends. The political initiation of a generation of Chinese youth during the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s prepared them for the role they have played in recent months; a decade of smoldering popular discontent with Maoism provided a forceful impetus to the outbreak of dissidence; and a drawn-out struggle within the Party inspired the contending factions to try to break the deadlock by mobilizing mass discontent against their opponents. These factors will be examined in some detail in the first two sections of this article. Section three will trace the course of the movement from its emergence in November 1978 to the first official crackdown in March 1979 (later developments will be considered in a follow-up article in the next issue of *Root & Branch*), and we will end with a few reflections on the limitations of the movement's challenge to Party dictatorship.

1. Roots of the Dissident Movement: From the Cultural Revolution to the Tiananmen Riot

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), and the decade of political struggle to which it gave rise, left a profound imprint on the democratic movement of 1978-79. Today's human rights activists were in their late teens or early twenties in 1966, when Mao Zedong (backed by Defense Minister Lin Biao) called upon students and young workers to rise up against "revisionists" within the Party.* In responding to Mao's call, they shared in an

*This was the climactic moment in the "struggle between the two lines." Since the mid-1950s China's ruling class—the handful of top leaders of the Party, State, and Army bureaucracies who collectively decide on every issue of any importance—has been split into two camps. Their disagreements touch on every aspect of social and economic policy; the fundamental conflict is over economic development strategy. The "Left," led by Mao Zedong, has favored a crash industrialization program modelled on the Soviet Union's First Five Year Plan. The goal of the Maoist/Stalinist strategy is to build up heavy industry as rapidly as possible by channeling all resources into the priority sector and by maximizing the rate of exploitation of the workers and peasants (through, e.g., industrial speedups and general austerity). Because of the backwardness of Chinese agriculture it was necessary for Mao to add something to the classical Stalinist pattern: a rural industrialization plan, aimed at rapidly increasing the crop surpluses to be delivered to the State. This program was put into effect in the Great Leap Forward of 1957-59 and proved disastrous, ending in three years of near-famine and economic depression. The "Right" then had its opportunity. Under the leadership of Head of State Liu Shaoqi and his lieutenant Deng Xiaoping, the first tentative steps were taken in the direction of "market socialism." The economic policy of the "revisionists" was characterized by the acceptance of a lower rate of economic growth, a shift of investment from heavy industry to light industry and agriculture, and a greater tolerance for market forces. The "Right" began to implement its program in the early 1960s, but Mao struck back with the Cultural Revolution, accusing Liu and his associates of trying to "restore capitalism" (the same charge which Stalin had leveled against his opponents) and, with the aid of the Army, purging them. After the GPCR Zhou Enlai emerged as the new leader of the "Right." (For further details on the "two-line struggle," see my article in Root & Branch 8.)

experience that shaped the lives of an entire generation of Chinese youth—and the stamp of the Cultural Revolution is still visible on the ideas and actions of the heretics who ten years later rose up against the legacy of the late Chairman himself.

Those who took part in the "Red Guard" rebellion enjoyed an opportunity, rare in such a tightly-controlled society as People's China, to speak out freely without fear of reprisals by the authorities. As one former Red Guard said in an interview in Hong Kong, "The period of the GPCR was freer than any time before. . .We could carry out rather frank conversations among ourselves and honestly declare our opinions in public." The habit was not easy to break. Furthermore, the young rebels gained valuable experience in self-organization, something they had never been permitted before. Unfortunately, the purposes for which they organized themselves were questionable, for most of the groups simply lined up behind either the Maoists or the revisionists and wasted their energies fighting each other. Nonetheless, the Red Guards did have, if only for a short time, the liberating experience of feeling that they were taking control of their own destinies. "China's future belongs to you," Mao had told them in his Little Red Book, and they believed him: "Our feeling was that we had truly become revolutionary youths of our epoch. We were really engaged in discussion of national affairs and shouldering heavy responsibilities," said one ex-Red Guard, and another declared, "We wanted to master the world." Their fear of the authorities vanished, as they manhandled top bureaucrats and paraded them through the streets in dunce caps. "These people were big figures before the GPCR. But now they knelt before us."(2) The power which the young rebels believed they wielded, however, was only on loan from Mao and his allies in the military.

In the end, their initial euphoria turned to frustration: the youth revolt did not achieve the goals laid down by Mao, and it was suppressed. The student and worker groups were disbanded, hundreds of thousands of urban youth were exiled to the countryside, and those who resisted the break-up of the movement were imprisoned or even executed. It was, to say the least, a disillusioning moment for a generation who had been told that the future was theirs. "In January and February we had risked our lives. Several of my fellows had been injured. . . .I myself could have been killed or injured at any time. . .What did I get for this? Nothing! . .I was actually being attacked and suppressed by the very authorities to whom I had dedicated my life. It seemed they had used me and cast me aside when I had ceased to be of value to them. My bitterness knew no bounds."(3) Even those not sent down to the villages were left stranded by the end of the Cultural Revolution, their careers permanently disrupted. When the universities reopened in 1970-72, there was no room for them; nor were factory jobs available, for industrial growth had been interrupted by strikes and factional battles. The "little generals" of 1966 became the lost generation of the 1970s.

It was the Maoist faction which had led the "left-wing" Red Guards into what they could only see as a trap, and it was against the Maoists that their anger and disillusionment were mainly directed. The "right-wing" youth—the ones who had defended the revisionist bureaucrats against the Maoists' assaults—retained their illusions about the revisionists; the Maoists were the main villains for them, as well. For a few members of each group, however, cynicism about one faction within the ruling class would later develop, under the pressure of circumstance, into a questioning of the entire bureaucratic system and a demand for radical social reform.

In fact, the Cultural Revolution itself furnished a political standpoint from which a critique of bureaucratic rule could emerge: in this respect, too, Mao's pseudo-revolution left its mark on the activists of the human rights movement. At the start of the GPCR, Maoist spokesmen heralded the "great lessons of the Paris Commune," drawing on Marx's account of the Commune as a model of socialist administration. From their viewpoint, the key provision of the Commune system was the removal of officials by the masses; this provided an orthodox Marxist-Leninist rationale for their own strategy of mobilizing mass discontent against their opponents. Mao soon repudiated the Commune model—"If everything were changed into the Commune," he said, "then what about the Party?"—but many young Chinese refused to unlearn the lessons of the Commune. They measured China's "Marxist" society by Marx's own standards and found it lacking. The vision of a stateless society—in which all administrators would be elected and subject to popular control and dismissal, would gain no material privileges from their place in the division of labor, and would command no repressive apparatus—spoke to their own sense of what was amiss in China. Their own grievances against political repression and bureaucratic domination and privilege found an echo in Marx's myth. The idea of the Commune, kept alive by politically active members of the Cultural Revolution generation, informs much of the political analysis of the democratic movement.

While their experiences during the GPCR predisposed a generation of Chinese to challenge Party authority, the ensuing decade of Maoist policy-making and factional struggle heightened popular grievances, creating a potentially explosive situation which was to provide the subterranean force behind the democracy movement. Insofar as Mao's program was actually carried out (resistance from the revisionists prevented a full-scale revival of the Leap Forward), it antagonized large segments of the population. This is not surprising, given that the Maoist development strategy was designed to maximize the rate of economic growth through general austerity, increased exploitation, and concomitant political repression.

Wages were virtually frozen; not only did the wage scale remain unchanged for a decade, but promotions within the scale were discontinued, except for a brief period in 1972 when the rightists were on the offensive.(4) Probably in response to the wage freeze, absenteeism and slacking-off on the job were widespread, and were reflected in official denunciations of "anarchism."(5) In addition, during the periodic Maoist attempts to launch a new Leap Forward, workers were pressured to work harder and put in more unpaid overtime; such demands were a major factor in setting off the railroad strikes of 1974 and the 1975 Hangzhou strike wave (more on these events in a later issue). Students had as much reason as workers to resent the Maoist faction: millions of urban youth for whom no jobs could be found in the cities were sent down to the villages upon graduation, and some ten million are still there.(6) The scions of the bureaucracy could usually manage to get reassigned to the city after a brief stint in the hinterlands; it was mainly the children of the working class who suffered permanent exile from their homes.

Although the urban population had reason enough to complain, the burden of the Maoist development program fell most heavily on the peasants. This statement may come as a surprise to anyone who is familiar with the academic and popular literature on China, in which Mao is typically portrayed as a spokesman for the peasants' interests; some scholars even describe him as the leader of a rural wing of the Party, in opposition to the urban Party of Liu Shaoqi. In reality, however, the Maoist variant of Stalin's political economy rests, as much as the Stalinist original, on a massive transfer of resources from the countrywide to support urban industrialization. During those periods when the Maoists were gaining ground in the factional struggle, the bureaucracy moved to tighten its control over the peasants' labor: domestic handicrafts and cultivation of private plots came under attack and rural markets were shut down or closely supervised. Instead of engaging in private labor to improve their standard of living, the peasants were ordered to devote their spare time to setting up small workshops and participating in labor-intensive capital construction projects (digging irrigation canals, for example).

Furthermore, when this rural industrialization program—or, more often, favorable weather conditions—yielded larger harvests, the peasantry enjoyed none of the benefits, for taxes and procurement quotas were raised to absorb the crop increases. Depriving the farmers of any share in the crop increases they had toiled to produce was, to be sure, never a publicly stated policy (its existence was only acknowledged in 1979, when the policy was being repudiated), but it was nonetheless a direct and inevitable result of the central bureaucracy's constant pressure on their subordinates to deliver more and more grain to the State. In some regions, the drain of resources from the countryside has had serious consequences: pressure to increase grain deliveries forced the peasants to cultivate pastures and forests, exacerbating soil erosion and making the land less productive. As a result, they became poorer every year and eventually were unable to meet the State's demands. In some of the most devastated counties, the population is gradually being resettled in neighboring provinces. Not all of the countryside was affected to the same extent, of course; the Maoist faction was never fully in control of every province. But the damage to China's agriculture must have been fairly extensive. One of the many reports on rural impoverishment that have appeared during the last year covered an area with a population of twenty-four million.(7)

The impact of Maoism was aggravated by the political

uncertainty that has prevailed for the last ten years; again and again, yesterday's purgers have become today's purged. From 1969 to 1971, the Maoists were more or less in command and tried to bring back the GLF under a new name; then, in 1971, Lin Biao and many other leading Maoists vanished from the political stage, the "capitalist-roaders" began to return to power, and until late 1973 official policy steadily shifted to the "right"; at this point the extreme wing of the Maoist camp (led by his wife, Jiang Qing) made a series of increasingly desperate and ineffectual attempts to recoup their losses. During the latter period the struggle was especially intense, with repeated outbreaks of GPCR-style streetfighting, accompanied by rising crime rates and a partial deterioration of social order. Young people exiled to the villages took advantage of these interludes of chaos to escape to Hong Kong or return to the cities by the thousands, where they could survive only by living off relatives or taking up petty crime.(8) The power alloted to the Maoist-dominated secret police apparatus was greatly expanded after the GPCR; the police could, for example, issue arrest warrants without authorization from the courts. Although "rightist" Party cadres and the urban intelligentsia were the main targets of the intensified political repression, they were not the only ones who were endangered, for in the atmosphere of constant purges and Maoist campaigns to root out "class enemies" among the people, no one was safe from the threat of being turned in by an overzealous activist or an enemy with a score to settle.(9) All of these factors contributed to a smoldering popular discontent, most threatening in the last two or three years of Mao's life.

The April 1976 riot in Beijing's Tiananmen Square—which has come to symbolize popular resistance to Maoism—was the most graphic illustration of the growing unrest of 1974-76. This incident is worth examining in some detail because of its significance for the democratic movement and for the factional struggle since Mao's death. The riot was indirectly provoked by the Maoists' response to the initiatives of the "Right." In 1975-76, Zhou Enlai, de facto leader of the revisionists since the GPCR, was dying; his heir apparent was Deng Xiaoping, who had been purged in 1967 as the "number-two capitalist-roader" and rehabilitated in 1973. The transfer of leadership from Zhou to the less diplomatic Deng sharpened the factional struggle: while Zhou had always avoided any direct confrontation with Mao, Deng was willing to risk an immediate showdown. Once in control of the economy, he began to press for a faster implementation of the rightist program. At the same time, grassroots Maoist cadres were purged by the hundreds. The Maoists responded with a new mass campaign which was obviously directed against Deng, although his name was not yet mentioned. When Zhou died in January 1976, leaving his post of Premier of the State Council vacant, the stage was set for a confrontation over the question of who would take over the leadership of the State bureaucracy. The ultra-Maoists stepped up their campaign; all expressions of mourning for Zhou were forbidden; and Deng disappeared from public view. The Shanghai Maoists, objects of almost universal hatred and fear, seemed on the verge of coming to power.(10)

The tension reached a breaking point during the weeks of preparation for the annual Qing Ming Festival. Qing Ming is the day when Chinese traditionally honor the dead, and in 1976 the holiday was transformed—partly at the instigation of revisionist cadres, partly as a spontaneous mass protest against the Maoists' bid for power—into an unofficial commemoration of Zhou Enlai. In the two weeks before the festival, thousands of memorial wreaths dedicated to Zhou were placed around the Martyrs' Monument in Tiananmen Square. Some were sent by PLA or State units, but many were from individuals apparently not acting on official orders. The wreaths were accompanied by poems eulogizing "the Premier who lives forever in our hearts" and denouncing "traitors who oppose Premier Zhou." The ultra-Maoists were all but attacked by name—no one could be unaware that the invective against "Indira Gandhi" and "the Dowager Empress" was directed at Jiang Qing—and one or two poems even took on the Party Chairman himself, under the guise of criticizing "the Emperor Qin Shihuang." (In the early 1960s, Mao had jokingly compared himself to the first Qin emperor, and "Qin Shihuang" had subsequently become a code name for the Chairman.) Day by day, the crowds that gathered to read and copy the poems grew larger. Plainclothesmen dispatched to the Square to persuade the crowds to disperse were met with an unaccustomed defiance, and several were beaten up. On Qing Ming (4 April) about two million people came to pay their respects to Zhou.

The explosion came on the following day, when the populace of Beijing awoke to find that the wreaths had been removed during the night. Throughout the morning a crowd which numbered perhaps a hundred thousand at its peak roamed the Square, laying siege to official buildings and demanding the return of the memorial wreaths. A police car sent to break up the demonstration was overturned, and there were several clashes with militiamen and police, in which hundreds were injured. An official sedan was torched, and when firefighters arrived their fire engine was halted and its tires slashed. After noon the crowd thinned out, but before things could return to normal the authorities took another step that provoked a fresh outbreak of rioting: they ordered the removal of the new piles of wreaths that had been accumulating during the morning. More official vehicles were burnt, and the riot began in earnest. At one point, the crowd surrounded the barracks that served as a command post for the militiamen who were trying to restore order; they demanded that the officer in charge come out and make an accounting of himself. He refused, and they set fire to the building. The officials inside barely escaped with their lives. Soldiers who came to put out the fire were pelted with rocks. By evening most of the demonstrators had gone home, but some three thousand remained at the Square to stand guard over the last of the wreaths. They were surrounded by tens of thousands of club-wielding militiamen, backed up by armed troops. Under cover of darkness, the forces of law and order had their opportunity to retaliate for the humiliations and beatings they had endured throughout the day. Hundreds of people were clubbed, some beaten to death, and hundreds more were arrested. In the following weeks, there were still further arrests and beatings, as police rounded up everyone suspected of having taken part in the riot.(11)

In the aftermath, Deng was blamed for organizing the

The dazibao as political weapon: In November 1975 wall posters attacking Education Minister Zhou Rongxin began to appear on university campuses. The real target, however, was Zhou's "backstage boss," Deng Xiaoping; the poster campaign was orchestrated by the Maoist "Gang of Four."

demonstration and stripped of all his official posts in the Party, Army, and State. It was not the ultra-Maoists who gained from Deng's fall,* however, but a moderate "leftist" who was presumably more acceptable as a compromise candidate—Hua Guofeng, to whom Mao addressed the now-famous words, "With you in charge, I am at ease." He was appointed Premier of the State Council and elevated to the newly created post of First Vice-Chairman of the CCP, placing him directly in line to succeed Mao. These steps were taken at Mao's insistence (Deng, he said, "represents the capitalist class") and were carried out in disregard of regular Party procedures, which specified that only the full Central Committee could make top-level personnel decisions. From the perspective of "socialist legality," then, Hua's claim to the succession was quite shaky. Worse for Hua, as head of the secret police he was personally implicated in the suppression of the riots, as were a number of his closest associates, such as Beijing mayor Wu De. The Tiananmen incident was Hua's Watergate: any move to reopen the case would threaten to expose his role in the repression and challenge the legitimacy of his rise to power. At the same time, Tiananmen was a powerful symbol of popular anti-Maoism, which would later be used by the rightists to mobilize mass pressure against the Maoists. Presently, we will see how "April Fifth" became the battle cry of the democratic movement and a useful tool in the hands of the Deng faction.

*The "radicals" did not give up, however. As Mao lay dying in summer/fall 1976, his most loyal supporters made their final bid for power. They mobilized their regional forces and for several months, battles flared up in the streets, factories, schools, barracks and State offices of perhaps a third of China's provinces. No doubt the "radicals" were already doomed to be purged once Mao was out of the way—they had made too many enemies during their climb to the heights—but this certainly sealed their fate. They lasted a month after their protector's demise.

2. The Political Context: The Struggle over De-Maoization, 1976-78

Early in October 1976, barely a month after Mao's death, his personal entourage—now labelled the "Gang of Four"—was purged from the Chinese leadership and thrown into prison. Since the Cultural Revolution, the Shanghai "Gang" (Jiang Qing, Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyuan, and Zhang Chunqiao) had been the standard-bearers of the Party's extreme "Left"; they were the proponents of Maoism/Stalinism in its purest form, the advocates of a full-scale revival of the Great Leap Forward. Their followers, a minority within the Maoist faction and an even smaller minority within the Party as a whole, consisted mainly of former workers and peasants who had risen to grassroots leadership posts and of middle- to top-level bureaucrats who had been rapidly promoted from the lower ranks of the apparatus; all owed their advancement to Mao's GPCR. (The most spectacular ascent was accomplished by Wang Hongwen; a minor police functionary in a Shanghai factory in 1966, he had soared to the number three position in the Party hierarchy by 1973.) Despite all that has been written by Western radicals on the "counter-revolution" in China,(13) the 1976 purge did not mark the demise of Maoism per se, but only of the Gang's particular variant of ultra-Maoism. The "two-line struggle" continued.

Untouched by the purge, the moderate Maoists, grouped around new Party Chairman Hua Guofeng, presented a formidable obstacle to the Deng Xiaoping faction. The leaders of the moderate Maoist group were, for the most part, experienced bureaucrats who had already risen close to the top ranks of the apparatus before 1966, when the GPCR boosted them all the way to the top. While the "radicals" were completely dependent on Mao for their political survival, and therefore needed to prove their loyalty by hewing closely to the orthodox Maoist line, men like Hua, with longer tenure in office during which they had built up networks of allies and proteges, could afford a measure of independence from Mao. They were ready to compromise, to relinquish those aspects of the Leap-Forward strategy most unacceptable to the "Right." But they could not abandon "Leftism" entirely; their milder variant of Maoism served to legitimate their own rise to power. Limited concessions, however, were not enough to satisfy the revisionists. They were not content with toning down Maoism; they wanted to eliminate it, in order to introduce a totally different economic program. To do that, they would first have to recapture power from those who had usurped it during the GPCR.

Thus the "Gang of Four" purge opened up a new stage in China's factional struggle. From 1973 to 1976, Chinese politics had been dominated by the last futile offensives of the ultra-Maoists against the resurgent old guard; from 1976 to 1978, it was the latter who went over to the offensive against the Maoist moderates. By 1979 they had achieved near-total victory, and the dismantling of Mao's social and economic policies began in earnest.

De-Maoization and its vicissitudes will not be touched upon here; we will return to that topic in our next issue. In the following pages, we will be looking at the 1976-78 phase of the struggle: it was from this context that the democratic movement emerged, at first as a by-product of the factional struggle.

At the start of this period, the balance of forces between "Left" and "Right" seemed approximately even, at least within the ranks of the civilian apparatus. Half of the Party's membership had been recruited since the GPCR, mostly under the sponsorship of the Maoist faction. More importantly, the Maoists were well represented in the central CCP machinery, including the Politburo. At the provincial level, a vital link in the Party's chain of command, Hua's group held the edge, as can be seen from a survey of the top leaders of the provincial Party Committees. Of the First Secretaries whose loyalties can be fairly certainly established, five were Gang of Four proteges—who had little choice but to line up behind Hua—and ten belonged to the Hua group. Eleven provinces, somewhat more than a third, were in the hands of Deng allies.(14) By this measure, Deng's prospects for a second comeback hardly seemed promising. But when we look at the military bureaucracy, an entirely different picture emerges. Of the eleven Military Region commanders, for example, only three were associated with either wing of the "Left," and of these three, one was purged as an "ultra-Leftist" while another ultimately defected to the Deng camp.(15) No doubt the "Right" could claim the loyalty of the central military machine as well, for almost all of the Maoist generals had been purged along with Lin Biao.

The Army's tilt to the "right" was predictable. Deng's relationship with the military had always been close, and as acting leader of the State apparatus in 1975, he further endeared himself to the generals by raising their budget and sending Chinese representatives on a shopping tour of the arms bazaars of Europe and Japan. Hua, by contrast, was faithful to Mao's doctrine of the primacy of man over weapon; in 1976-77 he argued for restricting the military budget, a position that could scarcely have won him many friends in the Chinese equivalent of the Pentagon.(16) Though virtually nothing is known about the back-room maneuvering by which Deng gradually undermined Hua's position, it doesn't seem too far-fetched to speculate that Deng's strong military backing was the key to his success.

Readying themselves for the political battles to come, Hua's group did all they could to bolster their position.(17) Hua demonstrated that he was mindful of Mao's strictures on the need for a personality cult. Photographs of the new Party Chairman appeared everywhere, and the official media were full of testimonials to "our wise leader." Billboards depicting Mao and Hua side-by-side—with the caption, "With you in charge, I am at ease"—bore witness to Hua's claim to the succession. On a more practical level, the moderate Maoists tried, successfully at first, to restrict the anti-Gang of Four purge to a narrow range of targets; the top "radicals" in the provinces remained at their posts. With somewhat less success, Hua courted the handful of provincial leaders whose loyalties were uncertain.

In a series of national economic conferences held in 1976-77, the new Chairman presented his own version of the Maoist program, leaning heavily on a twenty-year-old Mao speech, "On the Ten Major Relationships." This speech, though attributed solely to Mao, was a collectively-written patchwork of Maoist and "rightist" economic ideas, an ideal choice as a rallying point for the entire Party. In its specifics, however, Hua's policy showed little movement in the direction desired by the Deng faction. In fact, there was very little change in socio-economic policy in the first year after the purge of the ultra-Maoists; the few changes that did occur were limited to the fields (education and culture) in which the "radicals" had been influential.(18) Agricultural policy, Hua's specialty since 1975, was unaffected by the purge. "Learn from Dazhai," an old Maoist war cry, was still the slogan of the hour. Production brigades were encouraged to draft peasant labor for capital construction projects and small factories; private plots and rural markets were strictly limited; the drain of resources from village to city continued at the same level. Until autumn 1977, Hua's program was not even challenged; before they could introduce a new development strategy, the "Right" would have to wrest control of the apparatus from Hua and his allies.

The rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping provided the occasion for the first trial of strength between the contending factions.(19) Hua was, of course, eager to keep Deng in the outer darkness to which Mao had twice consigned him. In late November 1976 Wu De, doubtless acting on Hua's behalf, tried to drum up support for a revival of the campaign to criticize Deng, which had come to an abrupt halt when the Gang toppled. Only a handful of provinces fell into line, and the new anti-Deng drive was quietly dropped after a week or two. Generals Xu Shiyu and Wei Guoqing, south China's most powerful military satraps, sent Hua a letter in January 1977; the rehabilitation of Deng was among their "suggestions." According to an unconfirmed rumor, they hinted at the possibility of mutiny. Under mounting pressure from the old guard, Hua could not—even though he headed the Party, State, and secret police—block Deng's return. Hua's inability to stop his rival, despite all the power apparently concentrated in his hands, revealed the tenuousness of his hold on the Party and foreshadowed his defeat.

The "rightists" were not the only ones who yearned for Deng's return; the people's hopes for higher living standards and a relaxation of political tensions also rested on the shoulders of Zhou Enlai's heir. The first anniversary of Zhou's death offered the "masses" an opportunity to express their support for Deng.(20) On the weekend of 8-9 January 1977, the new regime organized massive memorial rallies throughout the country. Even before the official mourning ceremonies began, posters went up in Beijing demanding the rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping and an investigation into the Tiananmen repression; during the course of the weekend hundreds of pro-Deng slogans and posters appeared. Several posters attacked members of Hua Guofeng's faction—Wu De and Chen Xilian headed the list—for their ties to the "Gang of Four." On Sunday evening, part of the crowd of mourners attempted to enter the headquarters of the CCP Central

A hundred thousand people came to Beijing's Tiananmen Square on 4 April 1976 to pay homage to the late Premier Zhou Enlai—and to indirectly express their support for his successor, Deng Xiaoping. On the following day, a slight to Zhou's memory by the "Gang of Four" provoked a day of rioting which ended in bloodshed.

Committee, carrying a petition which demanded Deng's reinstatement.

Officially organized demonstrations are usually followed by an immediate return to normal; but in this instance, thousands of people continued to crowd into the heart of Beijing for the next week. New wall posters appeared every day, and a few brave souls delivered speeches calling for "democracy" and "human rights"; one speaker argued that the material privileges of the bureaucracy should be abolished. An unsigned poster said that the people should have the right to choose their own leaders, and claimed that Deng Xiaoping would support their struggle for "democratic rights." By the end of the week, the poster movement was losing momentum, and on the evening of 15 January, soldiers tore down all of the posters, making it clear that no further expressions of popular sentiment would be tolerated. A few of the pro-Deng activists may have been arrested. A week after the Beijing events, a twenty-page poster was put up in Guangzhou; it deplored the backwardness of the economy and the rising crime rates which it attributed to stagnant living standards. "We have a satellite flying in space, but on earth our farmers must still pull plows with their shoulders," the author wrote, demanding a rise in income for workers and peasants and the introduction of "measures so the workers can organize production and participate in controlling socialist property." This wall poster, and the handful of posters calling for "democracy" that had appeared in Beijing, anticipated the 1978-79 human rights movement. But they represented the voices of a minority; most of the mass political activity of January 1977 was centered on the factional struggle, and its aims were limited to securing the return of Deng Xiaoping.

The issue was finally settled at a Party conference in March 1977: effective mid-July, Deng would be restored to his former posts in the Party, State, and Army. This fell short of the demands raised by his most zealous partisans, for Hua retained the Premiership; but it was still a major step forward on the road to power. In exchange for his rehabilitation, Deng made a concession that saved face for the Party Chairman. He wrote a pair of letters, intended for circulation throughout the Party apparatus, in which he acknowledged his own errors, conceded Hua's right to lead the Party and pledged to serve faithfully under him. A compromise had been reached, but it was not to last.

Immediately, the balance of power began to shift in favor of the "rightists." The shift was most clearly visible at the provincial level: starting at the end of March, and continuing for the next year and a half, First Secretaries belonging to the Hua faction toppled from power, one after another. Three of them fell between March and June.(21) The new wave of purges was not confined to the upper reaches of the bureaucracy; it claimed victims at all levels. The PLA called for an "all-out people's war" against "ultra-Leftists"; as in the period immediately following the GPCR, dozens (perhaps hundreds—no official statistics were released) of former Red Guards were executed.(22)

At the Eleventh Party Congress in August 1977, Hua still appeared to be holding his own. His control of the Party and State was confirmed through official channels, for the first time, and the newly-elected Politburo was evenly divided between his supporters and Deng's. But in fact the Party Congress did nothing to shore up Hua's position, which continued its slow collapse. Wei Guoqing was appointed head of the PLA General Political Department, solidifying Deng's control of the military, and the pro-Hua commander of the Beijing city garrison was transferred out of the capital. In October the Party Organization Department—headed by Hua's man, Wang Dongxing—was criticized in the official media for holding back the anti-Gang purge, and Wang was soon replaced by a Deng partisan. Another Deng backer took over the Ministry of Public Security, vacated by Hua. At the turn of the year, two more provincial First Secretaryships fell to the "rightists." Amidst growing political uncertainty, the Fifth National People's Congress, originally scheduled to meet before the end of the year, had to be postponed until the spring.(23)

As the factional struggle intensified, it began to come out into the open, though in disguised form, in the Party media. Allegorical criticisms of the Mao cult were published and broadcast, with the emperor Qin Shihuang once more serving as a stand-in for the late Chairman. One official analysis, while admitting that the first Qin emperor was indeed "an outstanding historical figure" for his role in unifying the nation, cautioned that "we must not, because of this, make him a god." The *People's Daily* was more vehement: "As compared with the Communist Party, Qin Shihuang was but a drop in the ocean, unworthy to be mentioned in the same breath." The real targets of these allegorical sorties were obvious: the heirs and defenders of "Qin Shihuang." Mao's policies, as well as his personality cult, were tentatively challenged; as of fall 1977, the official press began to voice criticisms of the "Learn from Dazhai" campaign and the sending-down of urban youth to the villages, among other "Leftist" programs.(24)

When the Fifth National People's Congress convened in February 1978, Hua made what proved to be his last stand against the "revisionists": in an attempt to rally the entire Party behind his leadership, he presented the Congress with an ambitious new development program which promised to achieve the goals of the "Four Modernizations" (a "rightist" slogan from the early 1960s, revived by Zhou Enlai in 1975) well ahead of the original schedule. Hua's "New Long March" borrowed more than a slogan from the Deng faction. A wide range of concessions to the "Right," many of which were already being put into practice even before the NPC, were ratified by the Party Chairman's speech.(25) Educators, scientists and other intellectuals were offered better working conditions, and some of their pre-GPCR privileges were restored. "Keypoint" schools for the student elite were revived, students were allowed to enter universities without undergoing two years of probationary labor, and college entrance exams were revived. The "Revolutionary Committees" set up during the Cultural Revolution in factories, schools, offices and communes were abolished. Material incentives—bonuses, overtime pay, sometimes even piecework—were restored in industry, and the lowest-paid workers received their first raise since 1972.

Although Hua Guofeng was willing to go quite far toward meeting certain of the demands of the "capitalist-roaders," in other (and more important) respects his program harked back to the "leftism" of the Great Leap Forward. The production targets of the New Long March were extraordinarily ambitious, so much so that most Western experts doubted that the new targets could actually be met on schedule. Deng Xiaoping subtly dissociated himself from the accelerated Four Modernizations, in favor of Zhou's original timetable.(26) As in the GLF heavy industry, particularly steel, was the main focus of the Long March, and there was a boom in capital goods imports. Agriculture's role was also laid out in classic Maoist/Stalinist terms: the main consideration was to be the provision of ample crop surpluses to sustain the industrialization drive. Grain was the "key link," with annual output projected at four hundred billion kilograms by 1985. If this optimistic target was to be met, agricultural diversification would have to be sacrificed (despite Hua's claims to the contrary); the workers and peasants would continue to have the same monotonous diet, and consumer industries—dependent on agriculture for the bulk of their raw materials—would probably suffer as well. Thus agriculture and light industry would once more be subordinated to heavy industry. The New Long March was, in essence, a modified version of the Leap Forward, differing from the latter mainly in its greater tolerance for various forms of material incentives.

After the NPC the Long March, which was to be Hua's last major initiative in shaping economic policy, was set in motion, with an impressive program of new investments leading the way in the industrial sector. In the countryside, there were renewed attempts to increase State control over the peasants' labor: the level of collectivization was raised in about 10 percent of the rural production brigades during the summer of 1978. Decision-making power was transferred from the basic work units (the production teams) to the village-sized brigades. (Brigade leaders, unlike team leaders, are on the State payroll and thus more amenable to suggestions from above.) Although collectivization had been taken much further in the GLF, this was unquestionably a step in the same direction.(27)

From late summer through the fall, the struggle within China's ruling class rapidly built up to a climax. Hua's power base disintegrated, as province after province fell under the control of the "Right"; by October even the Beijing municipal apparatus was in the hands of a Deng Xiaoping supporter.(28) As the moment of reckoning neared, the policy disputes which the bureaucracy normally argues out behind closed doors were all but openly aired in the official media. Criticisms of the Mao cult, for example, grew bolder and more explicit. Deng set the pace with a June speech (first published, significantly, by the PLA's *Liberation Army Daily* rather than the Party press) presenting, in effect, his version of a limited de-Maoization which consisted in praising "Mao Zedong Thought" in the abstract while rejecting "mechanical copying" of the specifics of Maoism. "Practice"—and not the writings of Mao or Marx—"is the sole criterion of truth," Deng said. This was the signal for a barrage of attacks on "reli-

gious dogma" and "outdated principles," and a new political label ("whatever-ism") was coined to describe those who insisted on adhering to the letter of Mao's law. Questions were also raised about the Cultural Revolution—and, by implication, Mao's role in it. An article by Yao Wenyuan and a famous wall poster by a Beijing University teacher, two of the opening salvoes of the GPCR, were denounced as "counterrevolutionary": yet the poster had received Mao's imprimatur in 1966 and had been published in the *People's Daily* at his orders, and Yao's article had been written under the late Chairman's direct supervision. Thus Mao was being implicitly accused of disseminating counterrevolutionary propaganda. A politically sophisticated Chinese could hardly have failed to realize that de-Maoization was in the air.(29)

The severe political repression characteristic of the last decade of Mao's rule had claimed thousands of innocent victims, it was now revealed. Many people had been brought to trial on trumped-up charges and confessions extracted by beatings and torture; others had lost their jobs or been driven to suicide by relentless persecution. Until now, the official press reported, the authorities responsible for these abuses had succeeded in covering them up.(30) This campaign to restore "socialist legality" must be seen in the context of the factional struggle, for while the repression was attributed to the Gang of Four, the moderate Maoists (and for that matter, Mao himself) were just as deeply implicated.

The major confrontation that had been threatening for months finally broke out at a Party work conference that convened in Beijing on 11 November 1978. The original agenda called for two weeks of discussions on economic matters, but the meeting soon turned into a passionate debate over the personality cult, the GPCR and the failure of Maoist economics.(31) The Party's top leaders were meeting in the Great Hall of the People to decide China's future; the Maoist legacy had been under attack for months; the "Right" was on the move and about to score a decisive breakthrough: this, then, was the political background from which the poster movement emerged. In mid-November the Beijing Party Committee declared that the 1976 Tiananmen demonstration had been a "revolutionary" event, an announcement which seemed to give official sanction to popular anti-Maoist struggles; this may have served to trigger the new poster campaign. The first posters critical of Mao appeared within a week of the "reversal of verdicts" on the Tiananmen riot.

3. Voices of Democracy Wall

On 19 November a former Red Guard, his identity discreetly concealed behind a pen name, put up a dramatic wall poster which challenged the official interpretation of the relationship between Mao Zedong and the much-vilified "Gang of Four." According to the official line the "Gang" had kept Mao completely in the dark about their schemes to seize power. But the poster writer asserted that the late Chairman, "because of metaphysical thinking in his old age," had actively supported the ultra-Maoists' 1976 drive to overthrow Deng Xiaoping. That is: Mao had thrown his support behind a group which now stood revealed as a gang of "counterrevolutionaries" and "fascists." That the charge was obviously true did not make it any the less startling. In the next two weeks this poster was followed up by dozens of others along the same lines, some of which went considerably farther in their attacks on the Great Helmsman.(32) Other posters verbally bombarded Hua Guofeng's embattled followers, who were at the very moment taking their lumps at the Party work conference. It was not the first time that the inner-Party feud had been fought out through the uniquely Chinese medium of the wall poster.

The *dazibao*—a large wall poster hung up in some public place, often expressing criticisms of individual cadres—has been a familiar part of the Chinese political scene for years. Foreigners sympathetic to the CCP have usually described the wall poster as a channel for the expression of popular grievances against the authorities—and in fact posters have often been used for this purpose, though the cadres' ability to retaliate against critics makes this a risky proposition. But the vast majority of wall posters have appeared during the course of officially-organized campaigns in which the targets of criticism, and even the contents of the posters, are dictated from above.(33) The ultra-Maoists, in particular, relied on the *dazibao* as a weapon of factional struggle. In 1975, for example, Maoist university students in Beijing and Shanghai spearheaded a poster campaign against Deng Xiaoping. The students, under the direction of a "movement group" which received its instructions from on high, wrote dozens of sample broadsides against Deng and his followers; busloads of workers and students were brought in to study the samples, and then sent out to their own schools and work units to carry on the campaign.(34)

To a great extent, the wall posters that appeared during the second half of November 1978 seem to fit the pattern of past campaigns; almost all were directly concerned with some aspect of the factional struggle, and most simply expanded upon themes already raised by the official media: the myth of Mao's infallibility, the evaluation of the GPCR, the need for "socialist legality," etc. This, and the timing of the campaign to coincide with the "rightist" offensive, suggests that the Deng faction was using an old Maoist weapon against the Maoists themselves. But even if we assume that some of the posters were officially-inspired, it does not follow that the entire campaign was directed from above. Ordinary citizens had every reason to intervene in the Party struggle on the "revisionist" side, and every sign—from the first tentative press criticisms of the Mao cult to the Tiananmen rehabilitation—pointed to the conclusion that such intervention would be welcome. It seems likely, then, that many who took up the pen to criticize Mao were acting on their own initiative. In any case, whatever the mixture of spontaneity and manipulation that gave rise to the poster movement, one thing is clear: the Deng group, which now controlled the Beijing city government, was holding the reins. The posters were allowed to flourish only because the "Right" found it useful to bring the pressure of public opinion to bear on the Maoist holdouts. When the "Leftists" had tried to use this tactic, they had met with decidedly mixed results. The Deng faction, enjoying wider popular support, could confidently expect greater success; but even for them the appeal to the

"masses" proved, in the end, not without its risks, for it led to an outburst of "unacceptable" demands and the emergence of China's first genuine dissident movement. That outcome, however, was far from predictable in November 1978.

The poster of the 19th immediately captured the attention of Western journalists in Beijing, and with good reason: in People's China, even the mildest criticism of Chairman Mao has always been taboo, greeted with much the same enthusiasm as blasphemy in Puritan New England. It is not unheard-of for someone to be sentenced to months or even years in a labor camp for taking Mao's name in vain.(35) Yet the police did not tear down this heretical poster or hunt down its author; their unaccustomed diffidence could only have encouraged the people of Beijing to believe that the new regime was prepared to allow any idea, no matter how subversive, to be expressed. Later posters reinforced this impression, as the criticism of Mao became increasingly severe. He was accused of conducting a cruel experiment (the GPCR) with the lives of the Chinese people, and further charged with treating the nation as his own personal fiefdom by handing it over to Hua. "A tyrant who was presented to us in the guise of a 'savior,' " was Wei Jingsheng's verdict on Mao. Most of Mao's critics were less extreme; they insisted that he had been a great leader who had only erred in his old age. But all agreed that they wanted to be free to criticize Mao's mistakes without being branded "counterrevolutionaries." "Now we are speaking out what is really on our minds. How we wished Chairman Mao could have listened modestly to our opinions. It's a pity he can't do so now."

Permitting these attacks on the Mao cult served a number of useful purposes, not the least of which was to drive home to the moderate Maoists how isolated they were. But keeping the criticism within proper bounds was a delicate operation. It would not do to simply declare open season on the late Chairman, for if "the Almighty" (the sardonic epithet is once more Wei's) could be pulled down from heaven, what lesser bureaucrat would feel safe on his more earthbound throne? Something more subtle was required. The trick was to separate the Great Helmsman neatly into halves: on the one hand, the Mao who had led the CCP to victory in the civil war and presided over the nationwide consolidation of Party power; on the other, the Mao who had launched the disastrous GLF and thrown the country into chaos with his GPCR. The former was an honored ancestor, the personification of Party rule and national pride. The latter was a troublesome phantom, to be exorcised with utmost dispatch. A risky venture, but much was at stake.

It was not solely a matter of convincing the Maoists that their battle was hopeless; the demolition of the Mao cult had a wider-ranging goal. For a decade the "masses" and the lower-level cadres had been buffetted by campaigns and counter-campaigns from the "Left" and the "Right." No one could be sure that the "ultra-leftists" wouldn't make another comeback, and if they did, all those who had carried out Deng's policies would be in trouble again. The "revisionists" understood that they would be able to gain the widespread cooperation they needed only if they could reassure the "masses" that Mao's ghost would not rise again. What better way to prove the point than by allowing the taboo surrounding Mao's name to be smashed?

The success of this strategem depended on the critics' willingness not to overstep the line between exposing the errors of Mao's dotage and challenging the Party he had led. And in fact the first poster writers did not question Party rule; their goal was limited to intervening in the factional struggle as is clear from an examination of the contents of the November posters.(36) "From 1966 to 1976," one poster read, "China was under a fascist regime and the only person who defended us ordinary people against the fascists was Zhou Enlai." Zhou's "democratic group" had been locked in battle with another faction representing "fascist dictatorship and family politics." Zhou's chosen successor was Deng Xiaoping, "a great Marxist and an honest servant of the people"; the 1976 decision purging Deng should be immediately repealed. The same writer called for a thorough investigation, to be carried out by "followers" of Deng, of the Tiananmen repression—who was responsible, how many were unjustly imprisoned, how many murdered by the militia and police. Another writer took a sly dig at the new Party Chairman: "With Deng Xiaoping in charge," he said, "the entire Chinese people can be at ease," obviously a mocking reference to the famous words with which Mao had handed Hua the keys to the kingdom.

Hua was never criticized by name, but his supporters came under heavy polemical fire: Wu De was described as a "fascist" and accused of having tried to block the rehabilitation of the Tiananmen demonstrators, and Wang Dongxing was charged with being "a partisan of the Gang of Four and Lin Biao" who "should be expelled from the Politburo." Chen Xilian was attacked for his ties to the ultra-Maoists, and Ni Zhifu for his role in the Tiananmen repression. Several posters demanded the rehabilitation of a number of famous "revisionist" bureaucrats purged by Mao, including the (now deceased) heroes of the "Right," Peng Dehuai—who had denounced the GLF—and Liu Shaoqi, the architect of the "rightist" policies of the early 1960s. If the movement had remained on this level it would be of limited interest; posters directed against the Hua group had been appearing sporadically since 1976, especially in January 1977, when the "Right" was pressuring Hua to reinstate Deng. But the entire complexion of the poster movement was soon to change dramatically.

Even at this early stage of the movement there was one poster which stood out from the rest, hinting at the new direction which the movement was to take in the months ahead.(37) The authors, eight young people from Guiyang in southern China, belonged to a newly-formed discussion group called the "Enlightenment Society." The very existence of this group was noteworthy, for self-organized activity had been strictly forbidden since the end of the GPCR. The Enlightenment Society, which consisted mainly of self-educated workers, had been subjected to harassment by the authorities in their home city—their posters were torn down, they were threatened with the police—and the delegation in Beijing had come in hopes of finding the officials there more liberal. They chose an appropriate spot to put up their wall poster: directly opposite the mausoleum where Mao's body lay under glass, on the site of a building that had been burned to the ground

during the 1976 demonstration. "We've had enough of dictatorship," the poster said. "Chinese, arise! The time has come to oppose all dictators, whoever they may be." It called on the people to "crush and condemn dictatorship" and "destroy the superstitions of the past." The appearance of this manifesto was the first sign that the wall poster movement was about to pursue its own course of development, outside the narrow channels of Party factionalism.

Poster after poster went up, each criticizing the Maoist bureaucrats more harshly than the last, yet the police did not intervene. Foreign journalists in Beijing noticed a new mood in the city; for the first time, people approached them on the streets and struck up conversations. They asked questions—"Can you speak freely, where you come from?" was a common inquiry, "Can you criticize your leaders?"—and expressed their own hopes for China. "We want to say what's on our minds," one woman told a reporter: "Before it was impossible."

Thousands of people crowded around "Democracy Wall" (the main center of poster activity) every day, taking notes, reading aloud for the illiterate, holding animated discussions. "Never since this correspondent started working in China in autumn 1975 has the atmosphere been so relaxed," wrote an Agence France Presse reporter. He described a typical scene at Democracy Wall: "The crowd jeered as someone read aloud from a poster, 'I'm afraid we won't be able to achieve democracy, but in my opinion democracy and dictatorship can coexist,' and then shouted their approval when the reader interrupted himself to express his own opinion, 'Stuff that.' " A day later, the same journalist listened in on discussions at Tiananmen. "Most of the people involved asked why the socialist countries are at war with each other today while the capitalist countries are at peace. . . . One man on Tiananmen Square said, 'We've had a socialist regime for thirty years now, and what has this regime done? You think people aren't very well off in the city but you should go to the countryside. It's even worse. People don't have enough to eat or decent clothes to wear.' "(38)

The sentiments of the street crowds were clearly favorable to the anti-Maoist broadsides.(39) Readers often signed their support for the critical posters, whereas the few which defended Mao and opposed criticism were defaced or torn down. In fact, it had become dangerous to express "leftist" views: a Japanese correspondent reported that a young man who shouted Maoist slogans was beaten up by a mob of about fifty people. In a similar incident a few weeks later, a minor functionary who tried to rip down a wall poster was accosted by onlookers, accused of being a Gang of Four man, and followed for several blocks by a hostile crowd.

Beijing's democratic movement emerged from the ranks of those who gathered around Democracy Wall each day. One journalist estimated the number of readers at about ten thousand, out of a total Beijing population of some eight million; the number of poster writers was obviously much smaller. A member of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars who interviewed several activists found that they were mostly in their late twenties or early thirties; the majority were workers, often skilled, and only a few had ever attended college. Their parents held relatively privileged jobs—some were writers, factory foremen, etc.; Wei Jingsheng's father was a fairly high-ranking Party cadre—and had been among the targets of the Cultural Revolution. Thus despite their rather disingenuous claim that they were "ordinary workers of the lowest social level,"(40) and despite their declared ambition to speak for all of China's workers and peasants, the democratic activists in fact occupied an ambiguous social position: they were workers, to be sure, but they belonged to the "labor aristocracy" and often had family ties to the lower or middle levels of the bureaucracy. That applies, at any rate, to the movement's leading spokesmen; of the thousands of rank and file members, little is known.

As rigid social restraints were loosened, the gatherings at Democracy Wall quickly turned into mass demonstrations.(41) One evening a few people at the Wall spontaneously began to talk about the latest political developments, and hundreds of others crowded around to listen and join in. When the discussions and impromptu speeches were over, the participants decided to meet again on the following evening, and a small group was selected to organize the next series of debates. The word was spread, and on the evening of 26 November some two thousand young people met at the Wall and, after singing the national anthem, discussed the Party's new modernization program and the need for more democracy. One speaker told the gathering that Deng Xiaoping wanted to introduce genuine democratic reforms—several listeners expressed some skepticism at this—and that he needed their support. A group of Japanese correspondents put in an appearance to report on a meeting, held earlier in the day, between Deng and a delegation of Japanese leftists. The listeners cheered when they heard that Deng had concurred with the milder poster criticisms of Mao (the Chairman's judgment, he said, had been impaired by illness in his last years) and had confirmed their right to put up wall posters.

The next evening, a somewhat larger crowd returned to the same spot to hear the latest news. An American columnist who was scheduled to meet with Deng that afternoon had promised to deliver a report to the gathering; he didn't appear, but sent a messenger to read out a summary of the interview. This time, Deng had nothing bad to say about Mao; in fact, he said that some of the people's criticisms had been unfair, which brought groans of disappointment from the crowd. A veiled threat was apparent in his comment that "some utterances are not in the interest of stability and unity and the four modernizations." Still, he reaffirmed the right to voice opinions, even "incorrect" ones, and expressed his confidence that the "masses" would easily recognize and dismiss incorrect ideas. The main drift of the interview was generally encouraging, and evoked mostly cheers from the listeners. After hearing this report, the crowd marched half a mile to Tiananmen Square, chanting: "Long live Chairman Hua," "Long live Vice-chairman Deng Xiaoping," "Keep the memory of Premier Zhou Enlai forever in our hearts," "Long live democracy," "Long live freedom." Mao's name was not mentioned.

One marcher told a foreign journalist that this was the first unmanipulated demonstration in the history of the People's Republic. "Where you come from, is it possible

to hold a spontaneous demonstration without the police intervening?" he asked. An American visitor "overheard two gawking soldiers discussing the event. 'What's happening?' said one. 'It's the democratic faction,' replied the other. 'We're not allowed to interfere with them.' " At Tiananmen the discussions and speeches continued, with one speaker calling for the rehabilitation of Liu Shaoqi, while others asked what kind of democracy—Yugoslav style? American style?—was best for China.

Another meeting was held at Democracy Well on the evening of the 28th, but the organizers of the earlier demonstrations were not present. They had been warned off by the authorities, as the Party was already moving to assert its control before the mass meetings could get out of hand. A letter to the "beloved Central Committee" was read aloud, and it was made clear that the discussions must proceed on a "Marxist-Leninist" basis. Fewer complaints and more cries of "Support Chairman Hua" were heard, as well as much talk of "stability and unity" and "democracy within discipline." As on the previous evening, the discussions were followed by a march to Tiananmen; similar groups that had been meeting throughout the city fell in along the route, and the crowed swelled to five or ten thousand. One of the orators at the Square, believed to be a member of the municipal Party Committee, spoke for half an hour. Mao's insistence on imitating the Soviet Union was, he maintained, "the cause of all the mistakes and all the ills of China," including political repression and hostility to the USA. He praised the heroes of the "Right" (e.g., Peng Dehuai) and ridiculed Mao's GLF. Finishing with a call to obey the orders of the Party and State, he warned, "Do not let troublemakers join in your meetings." After adopting a resolution in support of modernization and democratization, the crowd dispersed. The nascent mass movement had apparently been maneuvered back into safe channels.

Despite the Party's best efforts to contain a potentially troublesome situation, the possibility immediately arose that the democratic movement, though in effect a creation of the "revisionist" bureaucrats, would come into conflict with its ruling-class sponsors. The first sign that the movement might break with the "revisionists" occurred when a new poster went up, in reply to Deng's defense of Mao. The author insisted that the people must have the right to criticize their leaders and concluded defiantly, "You can clamp down silence on the people again, but that won't solve anything."(42) Only a few hundred demonstrators showed up at Tiananmen on the 29th; the topic under discussion was that day's announcement that none of the leaders implicated in the Tiananmen incident would be purged from the CCP. A hard core of activists at the meeting vowed to carry on the struggle to topple the Maoist bureaucrats, even if they were shielded by Deng himself.

Murmurs of discontent had been voiced, and the Party responded at once.(43) The official media delivered the message that anti-Hua posters and demonstrations for democracy were henceforth forbidden. For several days, political study sessions were held in Beijing's workplaces and neighborhoods; a new Central Committee directive written by Deng provided the agenda. The masses, he proclaimed, must not hold "unbridled demonstrations" which might frighten off foreign investors, nor should they put up any more posters that attacked Mao or made excessive demands. Fresh wall posters went up, defending Hua and Mao; unlike the earlier posters scribbled on

notebook paper or newsprint, these had the polished look of official proclamations. Their tone was stern: "If the people who want to put up posters criticizing Chairman Mao gave us their names we would smash in their dog's heads. Chairman Mao is the red sun that shines in our hearts. . . . People who slander the leaders are flies." Other new posters cautioned against talking to foreigners.

For the next few weeks, the ban on mass meetings was strictly enforced. In mid-December, about a hundred unemployed Beijing youths demonstrated for jobs and stuck up posters. The demonstration was broken up by the police, and one participant was taken away, shouting, "We are allowed to put up posters." Later in the month, Shanghai industrial apprentices marched to protest low wages—not even adequate, they said, to buy enough food to appease their hunger—and harsh working conditions. The marchers were dispersed when police opened fire on them, wounding one woman.(44)

The law, it seemed, had been laid down: taking to the street was not permitted, and wall posters would be tolerated only as long as their authors remembered to color inside the lines. Yet within days of the November Central Committee directive, posters going far beyond the state limits appeared, and were allowed to flourish unchecked. And a month later the street demonstrations, too, started up again. Why did the Party back down? Probably the main reason was that Deng Xiaoping still had a use for the democratic movement. At the November/December Party conference, Deng's faction succeeded in removing most of Hua's men from their posts in the central Party machine, but they had yet to follow up this triumph with a comparable victory on the policy level. Hua's New Long March was still in progress, but the poster movement—Deng may have calculated—could help to slow it down.

At any rate, whatever the reasons, the poster campaign was allowed to revive, and crowds—though smaller and increasingly infiltrated by police agents—once more gathered at Democracy Wall. The Party factional struggle was again fought out on paper; old charges were repeated and new ones raised, and more of Hua's allies came under polemical fire.(45) Other posters expressed what seemed to be individual grievances against particular bureaucrats, with no apparent political motivation. An especially graphic example concerned a worker who claimed that his son had been beaten to death by local officials (see the box on this page).(46) Similar criticisms had often appeared in past campaigns, and posed no real threat to the ruling class as a whole as long as they focused on the wrongdoings of individuals who, all could agree, had abused their authority.

Fewer in number, but far greater in significance, were the posters which went beyond expressing personal grievances to expose systematic injustices, criticize basic structural features of Chinese society and offer a rudimentary analysis of China's ills and their possible cure. It is the existence of these documents which allows us to speak of a real dissident movement in the People's Republic. The imprint of Marx's Paris Commune ideal was much in evidence, although some writers also borrowed from Western political models, past and present. These writings were usually not the work of isolated individuals, for the democratic activists established dozens of small discussion groups.(47) The Guiyang Enlightenment Society has already been mentioned; perhaps the first Beijing group to appear was the "April Fifth Tribune," which published a mimeographed magazine of the same name. The group started out in mid-November with four members and had grown to about twenty by the time the tenth issue was printed; the other groups were undoubtedly no larger. Another important dissident organization was the "Human Rights Alliance," whose manifesto (summarized below) was one of the movement's major statements. By the end of 1978, Beijing authorities reported that some fifty groups had registered with the city government. Many of them published underground journals—*Today*, *Enlightenment*, *Chinese Human Rights*, *Explorations*, and others—which reprinted the most important of their wall posters. Average circulation was probably in the hundreds, but the most popular magazine, *Reference News for the Masses*, announced its intention to publish twenty thousand copies of its third issue.

> Peking, 20 December (AFP)—A Chinese worker charged today that his son was beaten to death in a reeducation class for recalcitrant people and that the killing was disguised as a suicide.
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> The accusation was made in a poster on the "Democratic Wall" here. Photographs of the victim's body showed the marks of many blows. The deceased, Sun Chin-chi, 21, was also a worker. He was sent to the special classes of the Four Seasons People's Township near Peking after he asked to be transferred to lighter work. . . .
>
> Two days later, his father Sun Chi-an was notified of his son's "suicide" by the local police station. Police explained that the young man killed himself after failing to escape from the classes.
>
> The father affirmed that witnesses said the escapee was beaten after being caught and that his skull was smashed with bricks. Then he was allegedly thrown in a pond where he drowned. . . .
>
> The poster also accused police of "lying" and denounced municipal authorities for lack of action after he complained: "They did not care a bit because it was not just a little study session that was being challenged, but the almighty Mandarin's organization of the people's commune."

In addition to their other activities, the Beijing human rights groups also sent out liaison teams to other major cities to offer encouragement to poster movements there. Since few foreign correspondents are stationed outside the capital, and the official Chinese media maintained a discreet silence on the wall posters, we do not know much of the movement in other cities, except that it did exist and apparently followed roughly the same course as in Beijing. At least two dissident groups are known to have existed in Shanghai—the "Pen of Youth" and the "Shanghai Writers' Group"—and wall posters and an underground press were reported in half a dozen other places.

The first important position paper of the human rights movement—the one document that more than any other symbolizes the transition from a factional movement still under the sway of the Party "Right" to a genuine dissident movement with goals of its own—was posted on

Democracy Wall on 5 December 1978. Titled "Democracy: the Fifth Modernization," it covered five large sheets of paper and laid down a systematic indictment of Party policy. It was the work of Wei Jingsheng. Wei's poster is worth quoting at some length, for it is typical, both in tone and in content, of much of the literature of the human rights movement:(48)

> When the Gang of Four had fallen, the people waited impatiently for the reappearance of Teng. He did return, and the people expected much from him. Unfortunately we still have the old oppressive system. Nothing has changed. The people do not dare to speak about democracy and freedom. Our living standard has not improved, and the higher salaries have not sufficed to compensate for the soaring prices.
>
> According to the concepts of Marxism-Leninism, the people should control the means of production. But ask yourselves, Chinese workers and peasants: Apart from the small wage which you receive each month—what do you control? What belongs to you? The answer is shameful: Others are your masters. In a socialistic society, the product of labor should belong to the worker. But what do you get? Just enough so that you can continue to work! Since the liberation, the people have been deprived while producing much wealth. Where has it vanished? The people have ended up with nothing. Is that the path to socialism which Marx imagined? Of course not. Then what is it? It is feudalistic socialism—a feudalistic, monarchistic system concealed under the cloak of socialism. . . .
>
> Before Mao Tse-tung died, his wife wanted a few thousand yuan.* But he had hundreds of millions—earned with the sweat and blood of the Chinese people. Who can deny that? And that transpired at a time when the Chinese were building socialism and did not have enough to eat. It is a disgrace that in our people's republic only those who hold power eat well and have nothing to do except read books, write poetry, and lead a happy life. Do the people not have the right, then, to snatch the power from these masters? . . . We want to be our own masters. We do not want to be the tools of ambitious despots in order to attain modernization. . . .
>
> Democracy is what the people ought to have. If they demand democracy, they are claiming only the rights which are already due them. If those who lead us do not give us democracy, they are shameless thieves and worse than the bloodsucking capitalists of the past. . . .
>
> How can we realize a democratic system? The people must themselves decide this question. Therefore, the masters need not worry about it. The masters are not concerned about democracy, but only about how they can withhold democratic rights from the people. . . .
>
> Comrades! I summon you! Unite under the banner of democracy. Do not look to the despots for unity and stability. Their slogans can only plunge us into misery. Democracy is our only hope.

The only concrete proposal that Wei put forth was that all leaders should be elected, and he made favorable references to Western democracies and to Yugoslavia—the latter, he said, "has shown that a nation does not need despots. The people can attend to their own affairs much better.

A wide range of political and economic grievances and demands was aired in the dissidents' posters.(49) Political repression was one major focus of discontent: "in the name of the proletariat, oppressive measures are taken against any citizen who entertains views different from the official line." During the Mao era, it was pointed out, people could be persecuted merely for accidentally breaking a plaster bust of the Chairman, or wrapping garbage in a newspaper containing his picture. "The Chinese people do not want to repeat the tragic life of the Soviet people in the Gulag Archipelago." Earlier victims of repression were not forgotten; a series of posters called for the freeing of the "heroes of 1974" (the "Li Yizhe" group, three young men from Guangzhou, arrested for putting up a "counter-revolutionary" poster) and other political prisoners. Poverty—and the Party's apparent indifference to the people's sufferings—was a second major theme. One worker noted that wages had been frozen for twenty years and the peasants' standard of living had barely changed since the 1950s: "It is fair to ask how much our wages will be increased to reflect the remarkable growth of production in the years following the fall of the Gang of Four." Another writer objected to the Party's order of priorities: "While people were begging in the streets in some parts of China, the dictator in our country distributed Chinese money to his fellow dictators in Vietnam and Albania." One critic was particularly vehement. "Tens of thousands of people do not have the wherewithal to clothe themselves or eat," he wrote; addressing himself directly to the "ladies and gentlemen of the Beijing city government," he declaimed, "Go to the devil, you who only fatten yourselves on the people's blood and tears."

While the greater part of the poster critiques focused on political and economic issues, a number of other topics were broached. The dishonesty of the official media, for example, was scored; "At the *People's Daily* there are no people, at the *Enlightenment Daily* all is darkness," one wit scribbled on a poster. One writer even went so far as to call for sexual freedom, describing the policy of enforced abstinence and late marriage as "a cruel crime which destroys the minds and bodies of youth" and leads to sex crimes. (The Party, however, retains its faith in cold showers.) One theme which was expressed in several posters involved an appeal to Western or Yugoslavian political models; the Enlightenment Society, for instance, called on Jimmy Carter to "pay attention to human rights in China" and spoke of Carter and Brzezinski as "two men who have a very positive influence on human rights move-

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*Wei is referring here to one of the charges brought against Jiang Qing: even as Mao lay on his deathbed, she persisted in nagging him for money to support her decadent bourgeois lifestyle. This raises an interesting question. Where did Mao get thousands of yuan to hand out to his wife, when his official salary was only a few hundred yuan a year? It would seem that the top bureaucrats must have had unlimited access to the public treasury; at any rate, that is the conclusion Wei appears to draw when he speaks of Mao as having "had hundreds of millions." Of course, it may be that the entire story is a fabrication—but in that case, we would be led to the equally sad conclusion that the People's Daily sometimes lies to the people.

ments worldwide." (*Sic.*) A split from this group, the "Thawing Society," praised Christian principles and "Rousseau's idea of human rights" as among the "progressive thoughts of mankind." None of the dissident groups rejected "socialism"—that is, State ownership of the means of production—or the CCP, but when the Party found it convenient to dispose of them, such expressions of pro-Western sentiment served as an excuse to brand them as "traitors" and representatives of the bourgeoisie.**

The most politically coherent wall posters offered an analysis of the cause of poverty and repression and outlined a program of social reforms. "China's system of government is modeled on the Soviet system," wrote a dissident who identified himself simply as "a railroad worker." "This is a system that produces bureaucracy and a privileged stratum. Without changes in this system, modernization will be stillborn or else we will move in the direction of Russian modernization where the state is strong and the people poor." The solution? "All representatives must be properly elected and responsible to the people. Officials should be paid the same as workers." This call for elections was echoed throughout the course of the poster movement; it was the most commonly prescribed cure for the national political malaise. The democratic activists were not content with the palliative offered by the "revisionist" Party leaders, who were preparing to submit the lowest-ranking cadres to electoral test, but insisted on the people's right to relieve *any* official of his post, not excepting Hua and Deng.

The most comprehensive statement of the movement's goals was the Manifesto of the Human Rights Alliance, a detailed program of economic and political reforms which encompassed virtually the entire catalogue of demands raised by the dissidents.(50) The Manifesto's nineteen points covered a lot of ground—ranging from "a total elimination of idolatry" (specifically, the removal of Mao's body from its mausoleum) to the "application of the Marxist theory which ensures complete individual fulfillment in a Socialist society"—but its general aims can be summed up in a few phrases: to place limits on the authorities' exercise of power, establish a measure of popular control over the bureaucracy, and raise the standard of living. Freedom of speech and the press, the right to travel and change jobs at will and the right to choose one's own style of dress were among the specific civil liberties demanded. The Human Rights Alliance also called for "the release of those who have been imprisoned all over the country because of the opinions they hold," an end to enforced birth control, an end to the enforced separation of married couples (it is not uncommon for the State to assign a husband and wife to jobs in different provinces, hundreds of miles apart), the right to speak freely with foreigners, the right to listen to foreign news broadcasts, and a variety of other rights and freedoms. The abolition of the secret police apparatus and more effective legal remedies for the unjustly accused were also demanded.

"We demand universal suffrage in elections for the State leadership, and local leadership, at all levels," point four began. Party and State cadres should be subject to the law, and there should be a constitutional guarantee of the people's right to criticize their leaders. Candidates from opposition parties should be allowed to stand for election to the NPC. Governmental secrecy must be eliminated: all meetings of the People's Congress should be opened to the public, and all economic statistics, including the number of injuries and deaths in work accidents, made available for public scrutiny. In addition, the Manifesto proposed the creation of an elected "Citizens' Assembly"

DEMOCRACY: THE FIFTH MODERNIZATION, Part Two (excerpts)—The "bourgeois democracy" of the West allows their citizens to express their will by means of elections, and even if the popular will is misguided, the people have the chance to right their mistake. That is why no "bourgeois politician" dares ignore the opinion of the electorate. . . . But the "proletarian politicians" can always decide to resort to the big stick to force the "proletarian masses" into submission. The people can then do little but contemplate the politicians' successful rise to power, and wonder at their life of pleasure and debauchery.

In the West, the people enjoy the benefits of progress. People in "socialist countries," like draught animals, only hope for some grass to eat after work. They must find their contentment in a barracks life, both strict and exhausting.

Western workers can go on strike and demonstrate, thus influencing the organisation of their work, as well as their living conditions. The Chinese workers and peasants must content themselves with the salary that Marx defined as the "bare essentials for the keep and reproduction of the labour force." . . .

At this point, the organs of the proletarian dictatorship interrupt us: "At least, in our society, we have solved the problem of hunger."

Is that really true? Perhaps it would be better to let "the dark face of socialism," i.e., those people who beg at the street corner in the villages and towns, answer this question. . . Those who lick Mao's arse have come to the wrong place. We have no room for these lies in China.

"Enough!" the disciples of Stalin and Mao tell us. "In capitalist countries there are shanty towns." Then settle this question for yourselves: isn't the working-class district behind the Chonwenmen restaurant in Peking far filthier, far more derelict, far more overcrowded, than the American slums?

"Stop!" the arse-lickers who have benefitted from the regime say. "In capitalist countries there is no equality between the sexes." Do they imagine that men and women are equal because they submit to the same oppression, because they lead the same life, more wretched than that of pigs and dogs, and work like galley slaves in order to benefit their Lordships—gracefully termed "socialist accumulation"!

"Please!" The professional slaves can't take any more. "In capitalist countries there are prostitutes." This time they should turn to their own whore, the police, and ask, how many clandestine prostitutes are there in China? And in the USSR? And how many young girls are there ready to "serve" the top leaders at any time? And how many young girls are dispatched to work in the depths of the countryside because they refused to "serve" their leaders? . . .

—Wei Jingsheng

**There was, as we will presently see, an element of truth in the Party's characterization of its critics as "bourgeois." The most radical of the democratic activists did, as their clash with the authorities grew more and more bitter, turn increasingly to the vocabulary of classical bourgeois thought in their struggle against Chinese "feudalism."

to stand watch over the day-to-day workings of the State. The economic measures put forth by the Alliance included the abolition of overcrowded slums, unemployment benefits for those for whom the State could not provide jobs, and a guaranteed minimum income for the peasants (currently, their income rises and falls with the size of the harvest, and in bad years many peasants must go heavily into debt to the State merely to survive.)

Of particular interest was point seven, which called for popular control over the economy—without, however, specifying how this was to be achieved. It is worth quoting in its entirety. "State ownership incorporates the means of production, and society as a whole should progressively take them over from the State. Socialization of production requires a corresponding system of socialization of benefits. The people must get more of the surplus. We demand to be consulted in matters such as the rate and amount of taxes that industry and agriculture pay to the State. And the State must account for the profits it makes in industry."

While the dissident movement was trying its wings, the situation in Beijing was complicated by the entrance of a new set of actors onto the scene. Throughout the months of December and January hundreds of the aggrieved, and even thousands, flocked to the capital from the provinces (some walking as far as a thousand miles) to present their complaints to the central government.(51) Often identified simply as "peasants" by the Western media—and indeed most were currently living in the villages—they were by no means a cross section of the rural population. The majority, all available reports indicate, were former city dwellers who had been sent down to the countryside. Some had lost their jobs during the economic crisis that followed the GLF; they had been living as peasants for nearly two decades. Others had suffered political persecution or even physical abuse during the GPCR or other Maoist campaigns. Many had appealed again and again to have their record cleared so that they could return to the cities or at least find steady work. The mass rehabilitation of victims of "leftist" persecution during summer/fall 1978 had encouraged them to believe that the new regime might now be more receptive to their pleas.

"Some of them," wrote a French journalist, "were straight out of a Goya painting—sick, on crutches, dressed in rags and tatters, wretchedly poverty-stricken." One woman offered her children up for sale—perhaps in earnest, perhaps, as a Chinese bystander told foreigners, merely to dramatize her plight. The woman told her story to a writer from the dissident journal, *Explorations*: "The father of these children worked in the XX coal mine in Heilongjiang. A gallery collapsed on him and he is now paralyzed, but the directors did not consider it a work accident and said, 'All the others took flight, why did he alone not escape?' We complained to higher authorities. In vain. The directors told us, 'We will stick to our decision even if you appeal to Hua Guofeng.' We came to Beijing, but here they direct us to our local leaders to resolve the problem. If we return we will die of hunger. And if we don't die of hunger they will persecute us cruelly. That has already happened to us. Here we have nothing to eat or drink and we are starving in any case.(52)

Those who did not have friends or relatives in the city slept in public buildings or even in the street, huddled around fires on the pavement. The temperature was ten to twenty degrees below zero Centigrade. "In Beijing, with its broad avenues and beautiful hills the scenery is fine and the air is fresh," one of the petitioners wrote mordantly. "It is a real pleasure for us to live in these hills and streets. Especially for those whose health is fragile, one can say that it is a veritable rest cure." The jest was a bitter one; half a dozen people reportedly died from exposure to the cold before the city government finally took action, finding lodgings for some and giving the rest permission to build a shantytown near the Great Hall of the People.

These people had come to petition the central authorities peacefully; more troublesome were the recently sent-down urban youth, who flooded into all of the major cities in unprecedented numbers to demand an immediate end to their rural exile. A few of the sent-down youth also came as petitioners; for example, the delegation from Yunnan who delivered the news that some fifty thousand of their comrades on the State farms of that province were on strike for better wages and working conditions. Most, however, came not to ask but to demand. During the GPCR similar groups of returned youths had been among the bitterest enemies of the bureaucracy (for a time, they had served as shock troops in the Maoists' assaults on the "rightists" who held power), for they had little to lose and were eager to avenge themselves on those who had consigned them to a fate they considered no better than that of labor-camp prisoners. The return of sent-down youth by the tens of thousands posed several dangers to the Party: not only that they might riot, as had happened in the GPCR, but also that they might unite with the democratic movement, giving their grievances a political dimension, or that their bad example might spread to the workers, particularly the masses of low-paid apprentices and temporary laborers. To one degree or another, each of these dangers did arise, only to be neutralized by the Party.

But trouble was not yet imminent at the start of the new year, and the bureaucracy felt secure enough to offer fresh encouragement to the poster movement. "Let the people say what they wish," proclaimed a 3 January 1979 *People's Daily* editorial. "The heavens will not fall." Later in the month it was announced that Li Yizhe had been released, and over a hundred thousand "rightists" who had criticized the CCP during the Hundred Flowers movement were freed after twenty-two years of imprisonment.(53) No doubt this new wave of rehabilitations inspired more victims of repression to come to the capital in the hope that their cases, too, would be reopened; by the end of the month there were said to be upwards of thirty thousand villagers in Beijing.

The human rights activists were not slow to respond to the renewed official encouragement, nor did the rural petitioners miss their opportunity.(54) On the anniversary of Zhou's death (8 January) democratic activists mingled with the crowds who came to Tiananmen Square to pay tribute to the late Premier; they sold copies of their journals and held public discussions. Two members of the Human Rights Alliance spent the day talking with hundreds of people about their manifesto; the response, they

told a Canadian reporter, was mostly positive. A week later the Enlightenment Society held an open meeting at the Square. The "persecuted Chinese" (as the petitioners called themselves) were also present during the unofficial ceremonies in honor of Zhou; on the eighth they conducted the first of a series of demonstrations. After gathering at the Martyrs' Monument to put down wreaths in Zhou's memory, some two hundred villagers marched around the Square for two hours; they carried banners which read, "We don't want hunger. We don't want to suffer any more. We want human rights and democracy." Similar marches were held in the days that followed, and when they were not suppressed the demonstrations grew bolder.

On the fourteenth they returned to Tiananmen with their banners and paraded—chanting "We're tired of being hungry" and "Down with oppression"—to Zhongnanhai, the headquarters of the Central Committee and home of the top Party leaders. By the time the marchers reached their destination they had drawn a crowd of two thousand sympathetic onlookers. Prevented by the military guard from entering the headquarters, they requested a meeting with Hua or Deng to present their demands, and insisted that they would not leave Beijing until their grievances were redressed. None of the top leaders answered their summons and by midnight the demonstrators had left—only to return, their appeals still unheeded, a week later. "We have no way of living a decent life," one said. "We can't express our feelings anywhere, and now even in front of Zhongnanhai we are getting nowhere. The leaders must be made to know this." Their vigil continued, without result, into the next day.

The Party began to issue warnings.(55) Its youth auxiliary proclaimed that young people must be "taught to correctly use their democratic rights" by going through regular channels rather than taking to the street. City officials, the new mayor among them, made speeches critical of the movement. The magazines were branded "underground" and the dissidents said to have received aid from foreigners in procuring supplies. Wall posters defaced the city and exposed Party secrets to Chinese and foreigners. Some poster-writers were even "class enemies," warned a deputy mayor, adding ominously, "those who should go to forced labor will go to forced labor, those who should be imprisoned will go to prison." His words were soon backed up by action: on 18 January Fu Yuehua, an early member of the democratic movement who had worked with the rural petitioners, finding housing for them and helping to organize their demonstrations, was taken into custody by the police. Her connection with the demonstrators was no doubt the reason why she was singled out for punishment; her arrest served as a double warning to the villagers not to pursue their course of action and to the dissidents not to join the demonstrations in the streets. (At present, Fu is still in prison; her October 1979 trial was interrupted and has not resumed. It is not likely that she will be released.)

Hers was not to be the last arrest; two of the people she had been aiding were soon to follow her to prison. On 27 January some thirty thousand leading members of China's ruling class met in the capital for a gala evening of eating, dancing and card playing. "A joyous mood prevailed in the Great Hall of the People," said the New China News Agency dispatch. Outside, the mood was far from joyous. More than a hundred ragged demonstrators gathered in the freezing cold, not far from the rows of official limousines, to stage yet another protest. "We want food," they shouted. "We want clothing. We want to be equal." As the party broke up the protesters were surrounded by unarmed soldiers, and two were arrested; according to a wall poster, they were later sentenced to five-year prison terms. Despite these instances of repression and the Party's earlier threats against the dissidents, the mass media continued to speak of the people's right to put up wall posters: the goal was to tame the movement, not yet to destroy it.

If the Party expected the human rights activists to quietly toe the line, it was mistaken.(56) A delegation from various dissident groups descended on police headquarters to demand the whereabouts of Fu Yuehua and the others who had been arrested. Acting in unison for the first time, seven of the groups signed a joint poster calling for a "protracted struggled for the application of socialist democracy." They protested the recent repression and demanded the immediate release of the prisoners and punishment for those who had ordered the arrests; in addition, they vowed to gather information on the repression and publicize it at home and abroad. Several posters went up in response to the Party's threats, the authors insisting that wall posters and demonstrations had constitutional protection. They also defended their right to communicate with foreigners and denied that their movement harbored enemies of the people: "It is the Central Committee that should be checked out to make sure that it has not been infiltrated by bad people," said the Human Rights Alliance. The editors of *Explorations* replied to the official attacks in similar terms, writing, "No one appointed you to make such accusations, and you do not represent the hopes of the people." Dissident posters forewarned that the Party's moves were "a signal for the extermination of democracy," but pledged that the battle for human rights would go on. A rally at Democracy Wall, announced by posters put up throughout the city, drew a crowd of around five hundred, including the ubiquitous agents. "If there are those who want to oppress us," said one speaker, "we are waiting for them! Let them come!" Another speaker added, "We will attain democracy by fighting. All the people must demand it, not just a handful like today."

A confrontation seemed inevitable. But when the anticipated crackdown finally arrived, it was provoked not so much by the defiant attitude of the Beijing dissidents as by a quite separate chain of events for which they bore no direct responsibility: an outburst of social protest which flared up in all of China's major cities in early spring 1979. Trouble had been brewing since the New Year's Festival (which fell on 28 January that year). Families separated at the Party's orders are allowed a brief reunion during this holiday; throughout the country, a new wave of sent-down youth flowed into the cities. This year, however, many decided not to go back; joining the earlier arrivals, they gave a new impetus to the struggle against the rustification program. In Shanghai, where demonstrations had already taken place as early as December, a renewed upsurge of protest began on 1 February when more than

five thousand people, mostly returned youth, held a sit-in outside the headquarters of the municipal Party Committee. City officials refused to meet with the protesters, who responded by organizing more demonstrations in the following weeks. Leaflets urging all sent-down youth to return to the city and join the fight for urban jobs were printed up and distributed. One group had an ingenious idea: posing as cadres of the municipal Labor Bureau, they telephoned the work units to which they had been posted and announced that Shanghai youth had received permission to stay and seek employment in the city.(57)

Frustrated by the Party's silence, the protesters became more disruptive; during one march, several people climbed atop trolley cars and shut off the power supply, blocking traffic in the middle of town. On 5 February more than a thousand demonstrators paraded through downtown Shanghai, trashing shop windows and besieging State offices. One contingent of marchers went to the railroad station and sat down on the tracks. They would not move, they said, until the city Party Committee granted them an audience; they might even hijack a train to Beijing. Delegates were sent to the railroad office, where they negotiated an agreement for a meeting at Party headquarters; but the rest of the demonstrators rejected that settlement, demanding that the Party Committee come to them. When station employees broadcast the text of the law against railroad assaults, they threw stones at the loudspeakers. The authorities sat tight, allowing rail traffic to be tied up for more than twelve hours, and gradually most of the crowd dispersed. The next morning the police moved in to clear out the last of the protesters, who greeted them with rocks and fists. Two youths were arrested, and the others were released after making a self-criticism. Wall posters soon went up throughout the city, denouncing the authorities and calling for the immediate release of those taken into custody.

Similar incidents occurred within the week in Hangzhou, main site of the 1975 labor unrest, and Tianjin. In Jiangxi province, a hundred sent-down youth descended on the Nanchang railroad station where their parents were employed to demand jobs. Not only did they deface the walls with "slogans not in line with stability and unity," reported the New China News Agency, but "at one point they encircled and attacked the railway bureau's leading cadres and disrupted the trains."

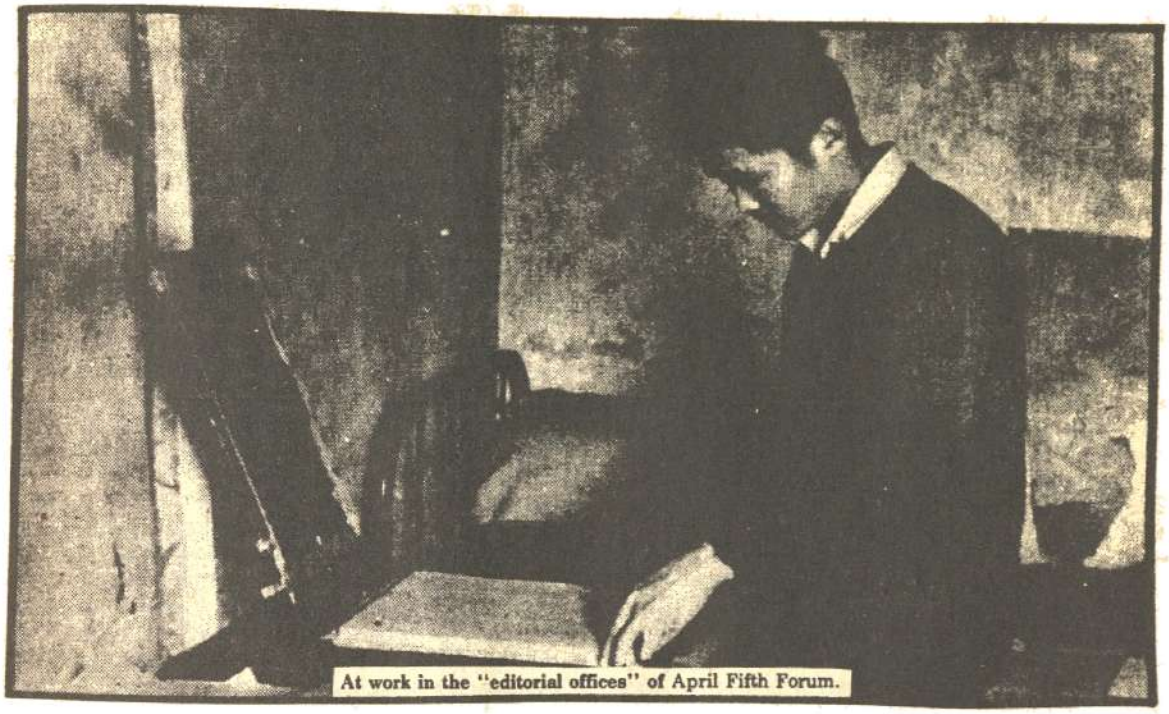
The official reaction—a mixture of vague promises and measured threats—was uncharacteristically restrained; it appears that the new regime wished to draw a clear line between itself and the "left" by showing that it would not resort to the old methods of heavy-handed repression.(58) Current difficulties were entirely due to the influence of the "Gang of Four," said a *People's Daily* editorial, and the new leaders were aware of the problems and working to resolve them. In due course, all past injuries would be rectified, if only people would be patient. The case of the striking Yunnan farm workers was settled relatively favorably—they were offered labor insurance and new housing—and the settlement held up as an example of what other petitioners might expect. Wide publicity was given to a number of instances in which young people had been reassigned from the countryside to urban jobs, with the unstated implication that others could look forward to the same opportunity as the economy gradually improved. At the same time, various groups were mobilized to bring pressure to bear on the sent-down youth (and on young workers, indicating that discontent was already spreading to the factories): their parents, youth league and trade union cadres, labor heroes and older workers. "We must not let individual troublemaking black sheep run wild," warned the official media. "It is an act of anarchy to make unreasonable demands that deviate from the targets of the Four Modernizations." Returned youths were ordered back to the villages.

A few stern warnings would be enough, the Party seemed to believe, to restore order. But unrest continued in the major cities for the remainder of February, and on into the next month. Due to the vagueness of the Party press—our only source of information on the disturbances—it is not easy to gauge the extent and duration of the unrest. For a period of weeks the media were full of denunciations of lawbreakers and calls for order. The last specific incident for which a date was given occurred on 9 March, but the press campaign continued long after that date. Great progress in restoring order was repeatedly alleged, but "a few problems" caused by "a handful of class enemies" were said to remain. It was only in April that the media began to speak of these problems in the past tense.

Assaults on State and Party offices, demonstrations that disrupted road and rail traffic, and the formation of GPCR-type street-fighting gangs were reported from many regions.(59) In Chongqing, groups of a few dozen to a hundred descended on State offices for what they called "collective visits," during which they beat up or kidnapped cadres. "A few people left their production or work posts without permission" in Jinan and "formed gangs to engage in bourgeois factional activities" (i.e., streetfighting). Youth gangs in Guangzhou forced their way aboard freight trains and looted goods bound for export; when police arrived, they pelted them with bricks and stones. In Hangzhou, purged "leftist" cadres mobilized their followers for an attempt to overthrow the new leadership. Other cities reporting outbreaks of unrest included Wuhan, Nanjing, Harbin, Xining and Lanzhou.

As in the "radical" mass campaigns of the past, there was a general deterioration of normal social order.(60) It was not only the State which was the target of violence, for criminal gangs reportedly terrorized some neighborhoods, robbing and even killing. A number of other social ills made their appearance in Shanghai: gambling, selling pornographic pictures, and—in a lighter vein—rollerskating in the streets. In Hunan province, there was dancing in the streets of Changsha. "Since they have been dancing for too long," an indignant citizen was quoted as saying, "and have used too much of their energy, this has directly affected their production and study on the next day." Furthermore, the dancers drew crowds of spectators, giving pickpockets an opportunity to ply their trade. Such violations of socialist morality could not be permitted to continue.

More seriously, the upheavals started to spread from the streets into the factories.(61) During the second half of March, the mass media in several provinces issued frequent calls for the preservation of work order and de-



At work in the "editorial offices" of April Fifth Forum.

nounced demands for improvements in living standards. According to Shanghai radio, "some young workers in a few enterprises began to talk more about eating, clothing and material comforts and less about how to accelerate the Four Modernizations, more about bonuses and wages for themselves and less about doing a better job in production. In some enterprises anarchist ideas began to spread again." Workers at an Anhui mine were told, "It is wrong to refuse to work and to create an unreasonable fuss" and warned that they would be punished if they continued to "cause unreasonable disturbances"; Shanxi miners were also charged with lack of discipline. At one Huzhou factory, "an unhealthy trend of violating labor discipline emerged among some young workers of the mill" and was overcome only by "repeated education" administered by Party cadres, while Jilin province reported "such distressing phenomena as violations of labor discipline. . .and production being brought to a standstill." From these scattered and often vague reports, it is difficult to form a precise idea of how widespread this labor unrest really was, but it does not seem to have been nearly as serious as in 1974-75, when tens of thousands of troops were sent in to break strikes. No doubt those instances of military intervention, and other interventions which followed in 1977 when the new regime was consolidating its power, played a part in damping down worker militancy.

While all this was going on, the Party was not idle; as it became evident that the wave of unrest was not going to subside quickly, the official response gathered momentum.(62) Shanghai authorities led the way, with the municipal police bureau issuing a notice on 6 March designed to "safeguard socialist social order." It read as follows:

> (1) In holding meetings and demonstrations, citizens must follow directions by the people's police. They are not allowed to stop vehicles and block traffic.
>
> (2) Stopping trains or getting on them without tickets is not allowed.
>
> (3) Storming Party, government and military organizations and enterprises is not allowed. Occupying offices, destroying public property, beating up and abusing cadres and people's police and interfering with the performance of official duties is not allowed.
>
> (4) Spreading rumors to confuse the people is not allowed. Inciting the masses to make trouble is not allowed. Engaging in any form of slander and false accusation is not allowed.
>
> (5) Except in designated locations, freely putting up or writing slogans, posters and big-character posters at public places or on buildings is not allowed.
>
> (6) Printing, producing and selling reactionary or pornographic books, pictures, photographs and drawings is not allowed. Gambling is not allowed. Selling ration coupons and certificates is not allowed.

This proclamation did not meet with universal acclaim; according to the Party media "a few people" raised objections. It was unconstitutional, they said, for the police to issue such an order without proper authorization; the

fourth and fifth points "depriv[ed] people of their democratic rights" by placing crippling restrictions on free expression. Furthermore, it was the Party leaders who were to blame for the disruptions, for their injustices had driven people into rebellion. Wall posters attacking the authorities continued to appear, and youthful orators continued to make speeches "confusing and poisoning people's minds."

More police were assigned to trouble spots, and local residents were lectured by cadres and police until they learned to "make a distinction between right and wrong." These "educational activities" finally "checked counter-revolutionary public opinion by forming revolutionary public opinion," with the happy result that people began to inform on the "bad elements carrying out sabotage activities." In a similar law-and-order drive in Lanzhou, the city militia was called out, under the command of its military superiors, to keep order in the streets, factories and public buildings. Numerous arrests were made: two thousand in Beijing and Shanghai alone, according to an official dispatch cited by *Le Monde*. One young man, charged with no more serious crime than repeatedly blocking traffic, was publicly tried in Shanghai and sentenced to five years in prison.

An increasingly shrill media assault was launched against the Party's critics, including wall poster writers as well as demonstrators.(63) "Recently a number of big-character posters at [Shanghai's] People's Square have slandered and hurled personal abuse at the socialist system, the Party and leaders. In their texts, people have given vent to their discontent against the socialist system, slandered the Party and leaders, and incited the masses to oppose the State." Dissenters were portrayed as traitors: "Some people have recently taken to expressing erroneous views and distorting facts to foreign guests...They grovel before foreigners obsequiously, seriously lacking in the national pride every Chinese should have," said the Shanghai media. The Beijing media did them one better: "certain scum of the nation betray Chinese national secrets and damage the national interest."

Though the Beijing democratic movement had no direct connection with what was happening in the streets—and in fact rather stood aloof from the demonstrators—it nonetheless fell victim to the law-and-order campaign. "Liberalization" had misfired; permitted to express themselves freely, the "masses" had not remained within the acceptable bounds of purely verbal protest. The discontented were too many, and their grievances too bitter; a few incendiary posters were enough to spark off a social conflagration. Now the sparks would have to be stamped out. The only surprise in all of this was that the Party delayed its response for several weeks after the initial outburst of unrest. The explanation later offered by Deng Xiaoping—that the Party was too preoccupied with its war in Vietnam to respond at once—is not entirely convincing. What seems more likely is that the Politburo was not unanimously in favor of a total crackdown on dissent. The "Right" had, after all, a considerable investment in the success of the liberalization policy which it had introduced, indubitably against the opposition of the Hua group. To admit that the policy had backfired would be an acknowledgement that the moderate Maoists had been right all along. Thus it seems plausible that Deng was responsible for the Party's hesitation, that he was playing for time, in the hope that the rioting would quickly run its course and the Beijing dissenters would have the prudence to avoid direct attacks on the CCP.

If Deng had any such hopes, he could only have been disappointed by the behavior of the democratic movement. In defiance of an official ban on discussion of the Vietnam situation, anti-war posters spread throughout urban China in the weeks after the invasion. One poster, signed "A State Employee," argued that "China has lost its international reputation" and violated international law. "A big country like China is striking a little child-like Vietnam," the writer said, with a note of indignation familiar to anyone who recalls the days when another Great Power was invading Vietnam.(64)

Nor did the human rights activists moderate their criticisms of the Party's domestic policies. The March issue of *Explorations* was the most provocative to date, featuring a Wei Jingsheng editorial which placed the blame for economic stagnation and political repression on the CCP's adherence to the ideology of Marx, Lenin and Mao. Two exposes of prison conditions in Beijing (also by Wei) were perhaps even more disagreeable to the authorities. The first, "The Twentieth Century Bastille," dealt with the routine use of physical brutality and torture against top-ranking cadres imprisoned for political devia-

tions (see box, this page).(65) The second expose described the "reception center" of the "Benevolence Forest" prison, where people who had come from the provinces to make complaints to the central government were often incarcerated. Here, too, beatings and torture were reportedly common. Wei's main informant on conditions in this institution—a Lanzhou railroad worker who had been declared a "counterrevolutionary" for criticizing the director of his work unit—claimed to have seen Fu Yuehua at "Benevolence Forest" after her arrest. According to his account, she was beaten so severely during one interrogation that she had to be carried back to her cell.

In a speech to top bureaucrats on 16 March, Deng Xiaoping delivered a clear warning to the dissidents, stating that some people were going too far in their posters and threatening those who "sold secrets to foreigners" with imprisonment. No one, of course, could be gullible enough to believe that the dissidents had actually "sold" military secrets; what infuriated the bureaucracy was that the wall poster revelations were generating bad publicity in the world press, at a time when the CCP was eagerly courting the international bourgeoisie. The barrier went up again between Chinese citizens and foreign visitors. After Deng's speech, Chinese who attended a dance at Beijing's International Club were expelled by the police, and those who had contacts with journalists or other foreigners were tailed conspicuously. Agence France Presse reported that two Chinese women had been arrested for sleeping with foreigners.(66)

Refusing to heed the official warnings, the dissidents struck back at the Hua/Deng regime, calling it "the inheritors and child of the gang of four" and dismissing its charges as "laughable." To the Party's claim that the demand for legal rights was a "reactionary" and "bourgeois" slogan they replied, "it is you who are wearing the cap of the bourgeoisie" and vowed that they would not submit without a fight. "If we go back to Deng Xiaoping's speech on 16 March 1979," Wei Jingsheng wrote in a special issue of *Explorations*, it is clear that Deng was abusing the confidence the people had vested in him when he thus attacked the democratic movement. Why lay all sorts of crimes, including the failure of the economy, at the door of the democratic movement, when they are the responsibility of the Hua-Deng system? Once again the people are made the scapegoat for their leaders' failure." The people should no longer support Deng if he intended to return to "the Mao-type tyranny."(67)

The third anniversary of the Tiananmen demonstration was near; to ward off the threat of new disturbances, the Party acted rapidly. On 29 March Wei Jingsheng was taken into custody as an example to the other activists. A member of the Human Rights Alliance was also arrested at the same time. Limits were placed on the contents of wall posters: no criticism was to be allowed of "socialism," the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Zedong-Thought." Exposure of "state secrets"—a useful term which means whatever the Party says it means—was prohibited. Members of the human rights organizations were tailed by the police, and a few people went underground; police agents inspected the files of dissident journals, looking for names.(68) The few who continued to put up resistance soon found themselves in prison.

Among those arrested were Ren Wanding, chief spokesman for the Human Rights Alliance, and several other members of the group. On 4 April they brought a new essay-length poster—titled "The Slogan of Human Rights and the Swindle of 'Marxism-Leninism' "—to Democracy Wall. "The enemies of democracy have begun to attack," were its opening words. The Party propagandists who had branded "human rights" as a "bourgeois" slogan were "imbeciles" for whom "Marxism must necessarily signify the abolition of human and political rights." The poster went on to denounce the "masters" of the "bureaucratic system" who "realize that if the movement achieved its demands, they would no longer be able to keep the positions which have procured them substantial income without having to be responsible to the people. They would lose their master positions and become true servants of society." Before they could finish hanging up their poster Ren and his comrades were surrounded by

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY BASTILLE (excerpts)

—[O]ne of the lightest and most common punishments at Qin Cheng is to first starve the prisoner and then give him or her a bowl of noodles heavy with grease as "compensation." Most, of course, get sick upon eating this and have to miss the next few meals as well.

Those who leave a bad impression upon the prison authorities are subject to all sorts of punitive or restrictive measures, including the banning of all exercise, such as walks or even movement within their cell. By the time an enforced immobility [of one prisoner] was finally lifted after half a year, he was no longer able to walk.

Irrational regulations of every sort govern the lives of the inmates. For instance, they have to sleep facing the door. Should you turn in your sleep, you will be awakened, and awakened repeatedly until you have learned to keep your face to the glass pane.

Qin Cheng is also supposed to be equipped with various modern instruments of torture: for example, exposing the victim day and night to a light so strong that after a while he feels he is going crazy.

Wang Guangmei [Liu Shaoqi's widow]... supposedly lost her reason as a result of prolonged torture. When the wife of a high cadre went to visit her, her appearance was hardly human.

The most common form of torture is simple beating. You are called out and surrounded by a group of men who slug and kick until you are bruised and bloody and completely breathless.

That Qin Cheng should have remained unknown for so long was due in large part to the fact that almost no one was let out before the 1970s.

Deaths were also frequent. Neither family nor friend could know whether the person was dead or alive.

We must permanently get rid of Qin Cheng Prison. We must permanently get rid of political persecution and imprisonment. It is not the few unfortunate victims but the basic political and personal rights of the entire people that are at stake. We might ask the high cadres who have come out of Qin Cheng: When you suppressed the rights of others to express freely their political views, did you secure your own? When you persecuted others using political pretexts, did you foresee yourselves being subjected to the same kind of persecution?

—Wei Jingsheng

police and dragged away. Protests against the repression and calls for the release of the imprisoned activists persisted for a few more weeks, but the most critical wing of the movement gradually fell silent under the impact of further arrests—some thirty or forty in all—and the "Beijing Spring" was over.(69)

Certain of the more moderate journals (for example, the *April Fifth Forum*, which pledged its loyalty to "socialism" and the Party) were allowed to continue publication, though they were constantly threatened with suppression if they stepped out of line. Only a handful of new posters appeared during the summer; the voices of Democracy Wall had been reduced to a murmur. By silencing its most severe critics, the Party demonstrated that it could crush the democratic movement at will. During the fall of 1979 (as we will see in our next issue) the movement would be permitted a brief revival, before being silenced once more —this time, it seems, for good.

4. Limits of the Democratic Movement

A venerable axiom of political analysis, as pertinent to the People's Republic as to any other class society, holds that conflict within a ruling class favors the growth of opposition among the exploited. This truism has been amply confirmed by the rebelliousness of Chinese students and young workers during the last fifteen years of factional rivalry. In 1974-75, clashes between "leftist" and "rightist" bureaucrats triggered strikes among the most discontented workers, e.g., the railroad coolies. In October 1974, a month after the first draft of the "Li Yizhe" group's famous wall poster had been circulated, a hundred thousand Guangzhou youth (mostly factory workers) held a demonstration outside the city to protest against bureaucratic privileges and authoritarianism.(70)

Popular discontent with the Party/State apparatus has occasionally been articulated in manifestos—such as "Whither China?" by the "Shengwulian" group, and Li Yizhe's "On Legality and Socialist Democracy"—which circulate illegally, in the manner of the Russian *samizdat*. For the most part, however, the opposition groups which produce these documents have been closely tied to the factional intrigues at the top of the hierarchy. Consider, for example, the Shengwulian, an "ultra-leftist" Red Guard organization which called for the overthrow of the "new bureaucratic bourgeoisie." Though sometimes described by anarchists and Trotskyists outside China as an embryonic left-wing opposition, the group lined up in practice behind Mao and his faction. "Whither China?" was written by the son of a high Party official, who was privy to the secrets of the CCP's inner circles; the manifesto approvingly quoted Jiang Qing and Chen Boda and named Zhou Enlai as "the chief representative of China's 'Red' capitalist class." Although the rank and file members may have believed that they were struggling to overthrow the bureaucracy and establish the Chinese Paris Commune, their leaders had clearly thrown in their lot with Mao's Stalinist "Left."(71) Similar misgivings may be expressed about Li Yizhe; despite their vehement attack on elitism and authoritarianism and their appeals to the Commune model, it now appears that their political viewpoint does not differ significantly from that of the Party "Right." Since their release, they have praised the Deng faction without reservation and have made no attempt to join the ranks of the dissidents. Moreover, they have revealed that their poster was written under the sponsorship of a member of the Guangzhou municipal bureaucracy, which suggests that they were involved from the start in the factional conflict.(72)

The democratic movement, too, arose from the strife within the Party, and in particular from the popular struggle to restore Deng Xiaoping to power, but it did not permanently remain in thrall to the "revisionist" faction. The calls for "democracy and human rights" heard during the January 1977 poster campaign had already indicated that at least some of Deng's supporters among the "masses" were developing ideas of their own. At that time they could still imagine that Deng shared their goals, but as soon as he actually came to power it became clear that he had no intention of enacting the kind of reform program they demanded. The ensuing confrontation was inevitable. But even though the most radical of the human rights activists were finally compelled to recognize the chasm between their program and that of the "Right," they did not come to this realization easily. It was only with great difficulty and after repeated disillusionment that the democracy movement began to free itself from the quagmire of factional politics and develop an independent political stance. And those who embarked on this course never fully succeeded in escaping from the deadend of official ideology; much of their thinking was still stamped with the imprint of "Marxism"-Leninism.

The democratic movement never questioned the Party's claim that it had established socialism in China when it nationalized the means of production. The existence of a socialist economic base was taken for granted: only the political superstructure was in need of basic reform through the introduction of "democracy" and "human rights," the movement's favorite catchwords. No fundamental conflict between the interests of the bureaucracy and the interests of the exploited classes was acknowledged. Not even the most radical of the Party's critics raised the possibility of social revolution; the challenge which the movement posed to the official ideology was thus a limited one. The ambiguous social position of the leading human rights theoreticians, which we have already noted, was perhaps the main barrier which blocked them from carrying their critique through to its logical conclusion.

The failure to make a complete break with Party ideology affected every aspect of the movement. For instance, the democratic activists, although attacked by the Party as "enemy agents," were in reality quite nationalistic, as evidenced by their singing of the national anthem before their mass meetings. They accepted the Party's self-definition as the embodiment of the national interest. Appeals to patriotic motives were an integral part of their propaganda; thus Wei Jingsheng, for example, called on Chinese youth to be "patriotic enough to prevent China trailing behind other nations and disappearing from the surface of the earth." Both Wei and the Human Rights Alliance justified democratization by defining it as a prerequisite for the implementation of the Party's economic

modernization plan. The latter group even went so far as to support the "defensive" action against Vietnam: "We must oppose aggressors and preserve our country's territorial integrity. The Chinese people will not be kicked around."(73) This was surely the nadir of the democratic movement.

Reform, not revolution, was the movement's aim; like the early civil rights and anti-war activists in the U.S., the Chinese dissidents wanted the system to live up to its promises. Hence their repeated appeals to constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, etc. (appeals which the Party has undercut by the simple device of rewriting the Constitution). When the human rights groups were first organized, they immediately registered, as we have seen, with the proper authorities; in an attempt to win official sanction for their actions; they have consistently and indignantly denied that their movement is in any way "underground." One group, the April Fifth Forum, not only registered with the Beijing city government, but even demanded to be allowed to pay taxes on the sales of their magazine.

Even those who looked to the Commune as a model believed in the possibility of gradual reform, as is well indicated by the title of one article published in *Beijing Spring*: "Abolish the Bureaucratic System and Gradually Establish a Democratic System Modelled After the Paris Commune." In effect, the article called on the bureaucracy to commit class suicide by renouncing its power and privileges. From the outset, the movement strictly limited itself to legal methods of struggle, i.e., petitioning the authorities through wall posters and peaceful demonstrations. For the most part, they held themselves aloof from the rowdy demonstrations of the rusticated youth; it was not the aims of the demonstrators (which they explicitly supported) that bothered them, but the illegal tactics. After the February incidents in Shanghai, the Human Rights Alliance denounced "violent, shocking acts by people trying to destroy the normal social order."

When the Party showed its claws, the boldest of its critics were forced to admit that the "Right" was no more favorable to their ideas than the "Left," and they became increasingly hostile to Leninism. Yet even in departing from the official orthodoxy, they paid a kind of backhanded tribute to its power over their own minds: they still did not repudiate the myth that China is socialist. Lacking a socialist critique of the bureaucracy as a ruling class, the dissidents could only turn in their growing disillusionment to the mystic realms of classical bourgeois political thought. Wei Jingsheng, searching for the roots of China's social and economic impasse, found them in the Party's acceptance of the undemocratic ideas of Mao, Lenin and Marx; he condemned the CCP for its "totalitarianism" and "suppression of individuality." But to speak of a conflict between "totalitarianism" and "democracy" is to obscure the real source of the bureaucracy's political practice, which lies not in its incorrect ideas but in its class position.

To be sure, a Marxist analysis of Chinese State-capitalism would have been of little practical use to the democratic activists. They could have taken scant comfort from the reflection that nothing short of a socialist workers'

Selling dissident journals at Democracy Wall.

revolution would suffice to remake China in the image of the Commune—hardly an encouraging conclusion, given the numerical insignificance of the Chinese proletariat. But at least it would have saved them from some of their illusions, such as the naive optimism with which they initially assumed that "feudalistic fascism" would simply be swept away by the people's awakened desire for liberty. And a clearer understanding of the fundamental nature of Chinese society would enable them to avoid being manipulated by one ruling class or another, which is the unavoidable fate of all who avail themselves of the abject consolations of ideology. That seems like little enough, but we can scarcely aspire to more ourselves.

NEXT ISSUE: a look at China's new "rightist" political economy, and an update on the democratic movement.

Notes

1. **New York Times** (henceforth **NYT**), 17 October and 7 December 1979; 18 January and 12 February 1980. More details on these events will be provided in a sequel to this article which will appear in **Root & Branch**, no. 10.

2. All quotes in this paragraph are taken from David Raddock, **Political Behavior of Adolescents in China** (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977), pp. 42, 44, 118 and 140.

3. Gordon Bennett and Ronald Montaperto, **Red Guard** (New York: Doubleday, Anchor, 1971), pp. 206-208. See also Miriam and Ivan London, "China's Lost Generation: The Fate of the Red Guards since 1968," **Saturday Review**, 30 November 1974.

4. Jan Prybyla, "Changes in the Chinese Economy: An Interpretation," **Asian Survey**, May 1979, p. 415.

5. William Parish, "The View from the Factory," in **The China Difference**, ed. Ross Terrill (New York: Harper, Colophon, 1980); B. Michael Frolic, **Mao's People** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 250-256.

6. The standard work on the **xiafang** campaign is Thomas Bernstein, **Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

7. See **China News Analysis** (Hong Kong) (henceforth **CNA**), nos. 1148 and 1149; London and London, "Hunger in China: The Failure of a System?," **Worldview**, October 1979. Reports of severe damage to agriculture seem to be limited to certain areas, particularly those where the Maoist faction was strong during the 1970s. I have seen no such reports from, e.g., South China. For a rather favorable view of living conditions in the southern province of Guangdong (based, like much of the Londons' work, on interviews with refugees in Hong Kong), see William Parish and Martin Whyte, **Village and Family in Contemporary China** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

8. Conditions in China during this period will be analyzed in more detail in a later article in this series, dealing with the strikes of 1974-75.

9. **Political Imprisonment in the People's Republic of China** (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1978); Claudie Broyelle, Jacques Broyelle and Evelyne Tschirhart, **China: A Second Look** (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), ch. 5.

10. For a popularized but fairly accurate account of this phase of the "two-line struggle," see Terrill, **The Future of China** (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978), chs. 3-4.

11. The preceding paragraphs are mainly based on Hua Lin, "The Purple Tien An Men," which appeared in English translation in the Hong Kong libertarian socialist magazine, **Minus 8**, June/July 1976. For the official version, 1976 vintage, see Broyelle *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-308. The latest-model official version confirms many of the details of Hua Lin's account; see, for example, the introduction to **The Tiananmen Poems**, ed. Xiao Lan (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1979). See also Lois Fisher, **A Peking Diary** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), ch. 8; David Zweig, "The Peita Debate on Education and the Fall of Teng Hsiao-p'ing," **China Quarterly**, no. 73, pp. 154-158; **Far Eastern Economic Review** (henceforth **FEER**), 16 April 1976, pp. 10-11; 20 January 1978, pp. 25, 28-29.

12. Terrill, *op. cit.*; John Newman, Jr., "Year of the Dragon: The Succession to Mao Tse-tung," **Asian Affairs**, July/August 1978.

13. For instance, Charles Bettelheim, "The Great Leap Backward," **Monthly Review**, July/August 1978; Patrick Tissier, "The Economic Policy of the New Chinese Leadership in 1977 and 1978," **Capital and Class**, Autumn 1979. Writers of this ilk often assume that the radical Maoist cadres, having been recruited mostly from the working class and poor peasantry, were genuine representatives of the "masses." To be sure, the bitter hostility of the "radicals" toward the ruling-class arrogance of the "Right" bore traces of their class origin, but it should not be forgotten that the "ultra-leftists" were brought to power by Mao specifically to carry out a policy line that was more repressive and exploitative than that of the "Right."

14. The province-level units controlled by "Gang of Four" proteges were Anhui, Liaoning, Nei Monggol, Ningxia and Tianjin. Shanghai, the Gang's own home base was taken over by a mixed team consisting of a Deng man, a Hua man and a third of uncertain loyalties. Allies (or prospective allies) of Hua held power in Beijing, Gansu, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hunan, Jilin, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Xinjiang and Xiyang. Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Hebei, Hubei, Jingxi, Shanxi, Sichuan, Yunnan and Zhejiang were ruled by supporters of Deng. Not enough is known about the Party Secretaries of Jiangsu and Shandong to identify them with either group. Some of these identifications are tentative, but the general picture is clear enough. For details, see Earl Wayne, "The Politics of Restaffing China's Provinces: 1976-1977," **Contemporary China**, Spring 1978.

15. Ding Sheng was the purgee (CNA, no. 1118, p. 3), Li Desheng the defector (**FEER**, 8 June 1979, p. 10). General Chen Xilian, who remained loyal to Hua, has been relieved of his duties as Commander of the Beijing Military Region (NYT, 24 January 1980).

16. Paul Godwin, "China's Defense Dilemma: The Modernization Crisis of 1976 and 1977," **Contemporary China**, Fall 1978, pp. 70-74; Newman, "The Chinese Succession Struggle: Sino-American Normalization and the Modernization Debate," **Asian Affairs**, January/February 1979, pp. 168-169.

17. Terrill, *op. cit.*, ch. 5; Wayne, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130, 136-137.

18. Jiang Qing's revolutionary operas vanished, to be replaced by "revisionist" revolutionary operas that had been under the Gang's ban; labor requirements for university students were cut drastically and there was a new emphasis on upgrading educational standards; and the policy of subordinating all scientific research to the immediate needs of industry was dropped. See Harry Harding, "China: The First Year Without Mao" and Andrew Nathan, "Continuity and Change in Chinese Policy," both in **Contemporary China**, Spring 1978.

19. Wayne, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-133, 139-140. A text which purports to be a translation of the Xu/Wei letter mentioned in this paragraph has been published in **Modern China**, ed. Dun Li (New York: Scribner's, 1978), pp. 349-352.

20. NYT, 7 and 11 January and 2 February 1977; **Washington Post**, 7, 8 and 9 January; **Christian Science Monitor**, 11 and 12 January; U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, **Daily Report: People's Republic of China** (henceforth **DR**), 6 January 1977, pp. E2-E3; 7 January, pp. E1-E2, E9-E10; 10 January, pp. E1-E7; 11 January, pp. E1-E2; 14 January, p. E1; 17 January, pp. E1-E4.

21. Wayne, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-144.

22. The wave of executions of "ultra-leftists" which followed Deng's rehabilitation was reported by foreign travellers who saw the official death notices; for a summary of their accounts, see Leslie Evans, **China after Mao** (New York: Monad Press, 1978), pp. 159-160.

23. Wayne, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-149.

24. Kenneth Lieberthal, "The Politics of Modernization in the PRC," **Problems of Communism**, May/June 1978, p. 15; Jurgen Domes, "China in 1977: Reversal of Verdicts," **Asian Survey**, January 1978, p. 14.

25. Lieberthal, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

26. On this point, see Newman, "The Chinese Succession Struggle . . ," *op. cit.*, pp. 176-177. For a brief description of Hua's economic program, see Joyce Kallgren, "China 1978: The New Long March," **Asian Survey**, January 1979, pp. 12-15.

27. As far as I know, only Tsor Sap-yi has taken note of the 1978 collectivization drive; see his "Towards an Understanding of the Deng Xiaoping Line," **Minus 5**, August 1979.

28. CNA, nos. 1110 and 1138; **FEER**, 3 October 1978, p. 14; 20 October, pp. 10-11; 29 December, p. 7.

29. **FEER**, 23 June 1978, pp. 19-20; 11 August, pp. 8-10; 22 September, pp. 8-9; 3 November, pp. 14-15; NYT, 17 November; Qi Xin, "Demolishing the Myth of the Infallibility of Mao Zedong," in Qi Xin *et al.*, **China's New Democracy** (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books Ltd., 1979).

30. **FEER**, 18 August 1978, p. 13; 15 September, pp. 8-9.

31. The meeting was secret, but some details were leaked to Western correspondents in Beijing and to the Hong Kong "left-wing" press (e.g., **Ming Bao**). DR, 4 January 1979, pp. E1-E2; 10 January, pp. E1-E3; 12 January, pp. E1-E3; 17 January, p. E1; 18 January, pp. E1-E3; 5 February, pp. E2-E3.

32. On the anti-Mao posters, see NYT, 20, 24 and 26 November 1978; DR, 20 November, pp. E1-E3; 21 November, p. E1; 24 November, p. E13; 28 November, p. E1; **FEER**, 1 December, pp. 10-11. Most of my information on the democratic movement comes from Agence France Presse and Kyodo dispatches reprinted in the FBIS **Daily Report**. Two journal articles have also proven useful: Arlette Laduguie, "The Human Rights Movement," **Index on Censorship**, February 1980 and M.C., "The Democratic Movement in China," **Minus 5**, August 1979. See also **FEER**, 8 December 1978, pp. 9-11; 6 April 1979, pp. 10-11; 13 April, pp. 13-14; 27 April, pp. 13-14; 11 May, pp. 26-27; 1 June, pp. 26-27.

33. On wall posters in general, see David Poon, "Tatzepao: Its History and Significance as a Communication Medium," in **Popular Media in China**, ed. Godwin Chu (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978); Beth McKillop, "Chinese wall posters," **Index on Censorship**, July/August 1978; Victor Falkenheim, "Political Participation in China," **Problems of Communism**, May/June 1978, pp. 23-24.

34. The anti-Deng poster campaign of 1975-76 is described in Zweig, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-145, 152-153; McKillop, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10. Both authors were students in Beijing during the period in question.

35. See, for example, the case cited in Jerome Cohen, **The Criminal Process in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1963** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 575-576.

36. DR, 24 November 1978, pp. E14-E16; 27 November, pp.

E5-E9; 28 November, pp. E2-E4; 1 December, p. E2.

37. **NYT**, 26 and 27 November; **DR**, 27 November, pp. E2, E4-E5, E7.

38. **DR**, 27 November, pp. E1-E4.

39. **DR**, 20 November, p. E2; 27 November, p. E8; 11 December, pp. E1-E2; **NYT**, 24 November.

40. The quote is from the editor of the **April Fifth Forum**, who was interviewed in Beijing by Helmut Opletal. For the text of the interview (in French) see **Paris-Pekin**, September/October 1979; Opletal has also given a brief account in **FEER**, 7 September 1979, pp. 28-29. The CCAS member who talked to democratic activists was Edward Friedman; his report appears on the editorial page of the **NYT**, 22 December 1978. Capsule biographies of several leading activists were published by the French leftist daily **Liberation**, 15 October 1979, pp. 14-15.

41. **DR**, 27 November 1978, p. E16; 29 November, pp. E1-E4; **NYT**, 28 November. The vignette involving the two soldiers is from Friedman's **NYT** editorial.

42. **DR**, 30 November 1978, pp. E1-E2.

43. **NYT**, 1 and 2 December; **DR**, 1 December, pp. E1-E3; 4 December, pp. E2-E3.

44. Toronto **Globe and Mail**, 16 December 1978; **Le Monde**, 2 January 1979.

45. See, e.g., **DR**, 8 December 1978, p. E1; 13 February 1979, p. E1.

46. The AFP dispatch excerpted in the box on this page is taken from **DR**, 3 January 1979, p. E33.

47. **DR**, 26 December, p. E23; 27 December, pp. E3-E4; 2 January 1979, pp. E8-E9; 10 January, p. E1.

48. The following excerpts are taken from a translation of Wei's poster that appeared in **Freedom at Issue**, May/June 1979, pp. 8-10. A rather more elegant translation by the redoubtable Simon Leys was published in **Commentaire**, Autumn 1979.

49. **DR**, 7 December 1978, p. E2; 11 December, pp. E1, E3; 12 December, pp. E2-E3; 18 December, pp. E1-E3; 19 December, pp. E1-E2; 26 December, p. E23; 5 January 1979, p. E22; 8 January, pp. E8, E10-E11; **Globe and Mail**, 19 December 1978; 6 January 1979; **Los Angeles Times**, 7 January; **Christian Science Monitor**, 8 January; British Broadcasting Corporation, **Summary of World Broadcasts: Far East**, section BII (henceforth **SWB**), no. 5993, p. 11. The passage from Wei's "Fifth Modernization," Part Two, quoted in this section is taken from **Index on Censorship**, September/October 1979, pp. 9-11.

50. For the full text of the manifesto, see **ibid.**, pp. 3-6.

51. **DR**, 26 December 1978, pp. E22-E23; 15 January 1979, p. E1; 25 January, pp. E2-E3; **Globe and Mail**, 15 and 27 January; **NYT**, 14 January.

52. This passage has been retranslated from the French translation which appears in **Liberation**, 15 October 1979, pp. 15-16.

53. **NYT**, 4 January 1979; **DR**, 2 January, p. E9; 16 January, pp. E4-E5.

54. **DR**, 9 January 1979, p. E1; 10 January, p. E1; 15 January, pp. E1-E2; 22 January, pp. E1-E2; 23 January, p. E2; **NYT**, 9 and 14 January; **Globe and Mail**, 8 and 15 January.

55. **DR**, 24 January, p. E1; 25 January, p. E1; 26 January, p. E1; 30 January, pp. E9-E10; 1 February, p. E1.

56. **DR**, 26 January, pp. E1-E2; 29 January, pp. E1-E2; 30 January, p. E1; 5 February, pp. E1-E2.

57. Chinese provincial radio broadcasts—monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation and translated in their **Summary of World Broadcasts**—provided the source of almost all of my information on the unrest in 1979. On the Shanghai incidents, see **SWB**, nos. 6039, pp. 1-2; 6040, pp. 1-4; 6041, pp. 1-3; 6042, p. 1; 6043, pp. 2-3; 6047, p. 16. Also useful were Lee Yu See, "Eyewitness Account of a Mass Rally in Shanghai on 1.2.79," **Mirrus** 5, August 1979 and Anne McLaren, "The Educated Youth Return: The Poster Campaign in Shanghai from November 1978 to March 1979," **Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs**, July 1979.

58. **SWB**, nos. 6042, pp. 1-3; 6043, pp. 1-2; 6044, p. 2.

59. **SWB**, nos. 6047, pp. 10-12, 16; 6055, pp. 3-4; 6073, p. 13; 6077, pp. 7-8; 6083, p. 9; 6085, p. 9; 6093, p. 8; 6108, p. 13; CNA, no. 1153, pp. 4-6.

60. **SWB**, nos. 6074, p. 1; 6079, pp. 1, 10-11; 6114, p. 3.

61. **SWB**, nos. 6080, pp. 4-6, 18; 6081, pp. 2-3; 6086, p. 18; 6103, p. 14.

62. **SWB**, nos. 6077, pp. 1, 6; 6079, p. 7; 6097, pp. 10-11; 6108, p. 13; **Le Monde**, 13 October 1979.

63. **SWB**, nos. 6060, p. 11; 6074, p. 3; 6079, p. 8.

64. **Newsweek**, 12 March 1979; **DR**, 26 February, pp. E5-E6.

65. The excerpts in the box are from the **NYT** translation of Wei's "Twentieth Century Bastille" (**NYT**, 7 May 1979). A full translation of both prison exposes was published in **Issues and Studies**, June 1979.

66. **DR**, 21 March 1979, p. L1; 3 April, p. L1.

67. **DR**, 26 March, pp. L11-L12; 29 March, p. L1; **Index on Censorship**, September/October 1979, pp. 7-8.

68. **DR**, 2 April 1979, pp. L3-L5; **FEER**, 7 September, pp. 28-29.

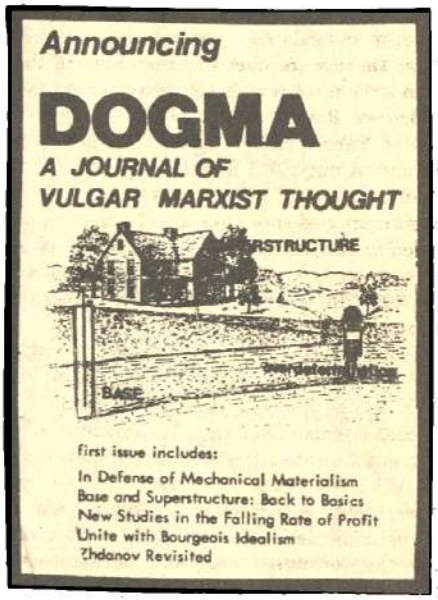
69. **DR**, 4 April, pp. L1-L2; 5 April, pp. L9-L10; 9 April, pp. L1-L2; 23 April, pp. L1-L2.

70. Frolic, **op. cit.**, pp. 259-263.

71. Jin Huang, "Democracy and the Legal System in Communist China," in Qi Xin **et al.**, **op. cit.**, p. 18 n. 4. For the full text of "Whither China?," see **China: The Revolution Is Dead, Long Live the Revolution**, ed. the 70's (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1977), pp. 153-170.

72. Li Yizhe's poster appears in **ibid.**, pp. 213-241 and is analyzed in Susan Shirk, " 'Going Against the Tide': Political Dissent in China," **Survey**, Winter 1979. See also **DR**, 15 February 1979, p. E1.

73. **DR**, 23 February, p. E1.



THE RED BRIGADES: Between Stalinism and Leftism

1. A Diversified Movement

When speaking of the armed groups in Italy it is necessary first of all to emphasize the extent of this phenomenon, and also to distinguish different tendencies within it. During the summer of 1977, for example, the Italian police claimed to have identified about a hundred armed groups, of which only four or five were classified as "stable," the others being considered "variable." At the end of the same year there were over 300 members of these armed groups in prison, of which 152 belonged to the Red Brigades (Brigate Rosse, or BR).(1) According to the Italian Communist Party (PCI), "in the course of 1978 these groups carried out 2,365 armed actions, i.e., 10 percent more than last year (37 killed and 412 injured). The majority of bombings and shootings are claimed by the left: 619 as opposed to 55 claimed by the right. One can also note a big increase in the number of these groups. The PCI recorded 209 different groups in 1978, although the bloodiest actions still were due to the BR."(2)

Almost all the more structured groups with a continuous activity have an ideology of leninist inspiration. Among them, the Red Brigades represent the more orthodox marxist-leninist tendency, while many of the other groups are influenced by the ideas of Italian "workerism."(3) With respect to structure there are, on the one hand, the stable insurrectionist groups, which present themselves as parties "of a new kind." On the other hand, there are the variable, "marginal" organizations which claim to be the armed expression of specific sectors of the Movement*: women, youth, delinquents, etc., and which "form and disband as the moment or occasion demands, changing their name each time."(4) They inhabit what is called the zone of "diffuse terrorism," the growing milieu of individuals and impermanent groups which adopt violent modes of action, from stealing from supermarkets to attacks on minor government officials and factory foremen. The NAP (Nuclei Armati Proletari, or Armed Proletarian Cells), for instance, was created with the objective of supporting prisoners' struggles. These two types of groups also have different conceptions on other questions, such as the type of violence to use, their objectives, their relation to the masses, and so on. The marginalist and workerist groups put forward the idea of the "armed movement" in opposition to the insurrectionalists' concept of the "armed party." Among the insurrectionalist groups the best known are Prima Linea and, of course, the Red Brigades; in fact, these are the only ones which still really exist today, and there seems to be contact between the leaderships of the two groups.

Prima Linea, which regularly carries out armed actions, has a position halfway between that of the Red Brigades—entirely dedicated to the notion of the "armed party"—and that of the "marginalist" groups. For Prima Linea, the question is to reconcile "terrorism with mass-based urban guerrilla activity: the only strategy that will avoid separation from the popular struggles, that will allow an enlargement of the bases of support and which will prevent a retreat into total clandestinity. Their members do not live underground but work normally, agitating in the factories, and alternating between clandestine armed actions and the social camouflage of everyday life."(5) This model of the "new party" is quite different from that of the Red Brigades, as we will see.

There is a further, anarchist, tendency which is very small. The most well known group here is *Azione Rivoluzionaria*, though it lacks organizational efficacy; the majority of its members are in prison at this moment. They were the only group to attack members of the PCI, which marked a rupture between them and the other armed groups in relation to the Communist Party.

*This term is used in Italy to denote the extra-parliamentary left in general, including many organizations and collectives along with individuals.

Presently, the Red Brigades are the best organized and implanted armed group in Italy, the only group which could attempt to be the pole of convergence of all of the other armed groups. This is mainly due to their apparently superior "effectiveness." Without dismissing other hypotheses, we can perhaps explain this situation by two factors. First, it is necessary to take into consideration the importance of the stalinist tradition in the post-war Italian left; second, we must understand the consequences of the road the Red Brigades have chosen: namely, their decision to operate within the framework of "political autonomy," rejecting the perspective of directly linking itself to the mass movement.

2. The Parallel Party and the Stalinist Tradition

We will begin with the importance of the stalinist tradition in Italy. From the end of the war until the electoral campaign of 1975 (still very much centered on the corrupt nature of the Christian Democrats) the PCI had always strongly attacked the Christian Democrats (DC). Up to this time, the party followed a double policy, combining legal with illegal activity. The latter was preserved in case of the need to oppose anti-fascist violence to the fascist putschist tendencies which, until very recently, the whole of the Italian left considered a great danger. This double policy was increasingly called into question by the progressive strengthening of the strictly legalist tendencies within the party, proponents of "eurocommunism" and collaboration with the DC. As a consequence of the debates among the leadership of the PCI provoked by the coup in Chile, the legalist line got the upper hand. But for an important part of the party—above all for the old militants and functionaries marked by the experience of stalinism and the Resistance and also by a "class" hatred of the DC with its corruption and cold war line—it was very difficult to accept the new direction signalled by the "historic compromise."

This hard-line tendency of the PCI has come to be called the "parallel party"; it is not officially recognized but is tolerated. It groups old stalinist cadres, the majority of whom were linked to a clandestine military organization that the PC created during the war called *Volunta Rossa*. After the war, this organization was converted into the internal police apparatus of the party, its "iron fist" for dealing with its opponents. It was officially dissolved (others say it went into clandestinity again) during the Cold War. Even so, actions claimed by *Volunta Rossa* took place in the 1950s in Regio Emilia. Their objectives of "popular justice" against the bosses and their technique —rapid and effective actions—have a curious resemblance to those of today's armed groups. Some who hold leading

WI FC 1077232 WATCH YOUR CREDIT INTERNATIONAL NEWS PHOTOS SLUG (FLAGS) RED BANNERS ON THE MARCH IN ITALY — MILAN, ITALY — THE MASSED RED BANNERS OF COMMUNIST ORGANIZATIONS ARE BORNE ALONG A STREET OF MILAN AS THE COMMUNISTS MAKE A SHOW OF STRENGTH DURING FUNERAL PROCESSION FOR A SLAIN RED RIOTER. THIS LATEST "MARTYR" FOR COMMUNISM WAS KNOCKED OFF IN ONE OF THE RED-INSTIGATED RIOTS IN MILAN. ITALY IS BEING TORN WITH SUCH AFFAIRS AS THE REDS TRY TO DISCREDIT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IN THEIR OWN BID FOR POWER. THE BITTER POLITICAL RIOTING HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR SEVENTEEN DAYS, LEAVING AT LEAST TWENTY PERSONS DEAD SO FAR. (SM-11-22-47)

positions in this parallel organization of the PCI still today occupy important positions in the local apparatus of the party and openly proclaim their stalinist positions (for example, Vidal, who as a Comintern cadre in Spain in 1936 was responsible for the murders of Berneri and Nin).

More generally, the parallel party forms part of the anti-fascist milieu which is still very strong in Italy.(6) The constant preoccupation of these people has been to build a united front against the danger of a fascist coup d'etat. After the right-wing bombings which occurred in 1969 in Milan, fascist terror again appeared a reality and the problem of fascism could hardly be seen as a mystification. Indeed the bombings created a certain fear within the workers' movement. The workers believed that it was a violent response of the conservative sectors of the State to their social agitation of 1968-69. The political consequences of these events were very important. The anti-fascist front was reinforced by leftist groups of leninist inspiration, that still today constantly attack the fascists, particularly the MSI (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*, neo-fascist party with parliamentary representation). Apropos of this, it should not be forgotten that it was not until 1973 that the PC condemned leftist violence against the fascists. We could say, therefore, that the confluence of the organized leftists and the PC, and the former's acceptance of the political institutions, is the result of the anti-fascist activity since 1969. It is within this terrain of anti-fascism that the BR's have their place.

From the start, then, the BR wished to take on the role of anti-fascist defense, and at the same time to occupy the stalinist political vacuum opened up by the evolution of the PCI toward the "historic compromise." It should be pointed out, however, that this relationship between the BR and the "parallel party" is neither so simple as this nor so direct. On the one hand, this "party" does not have a structural form with which contacts or links could be established. On the other hand, not all classic stalinists of the PCI agree with the BR; far from it, in fact, as some even propose their physical liquidation, in the name of the same logic of the fascist danger which attracts other stalinists to the BR! Nevertheless, to understand the phenomenon of armed struggle in Italy and the impact of a group like the BR, it is necessary to understand, first and foremost, that in Italian society stalinism and militant anti-fascism are an expression of a political culture with considerable roots amongst the communist masses and certain popular sectors. It is to these militant principles and traditions which the BR refers itself and to which it appeals in seeking its social basis of support.

3. The Efficacy of "Political Autonomy"

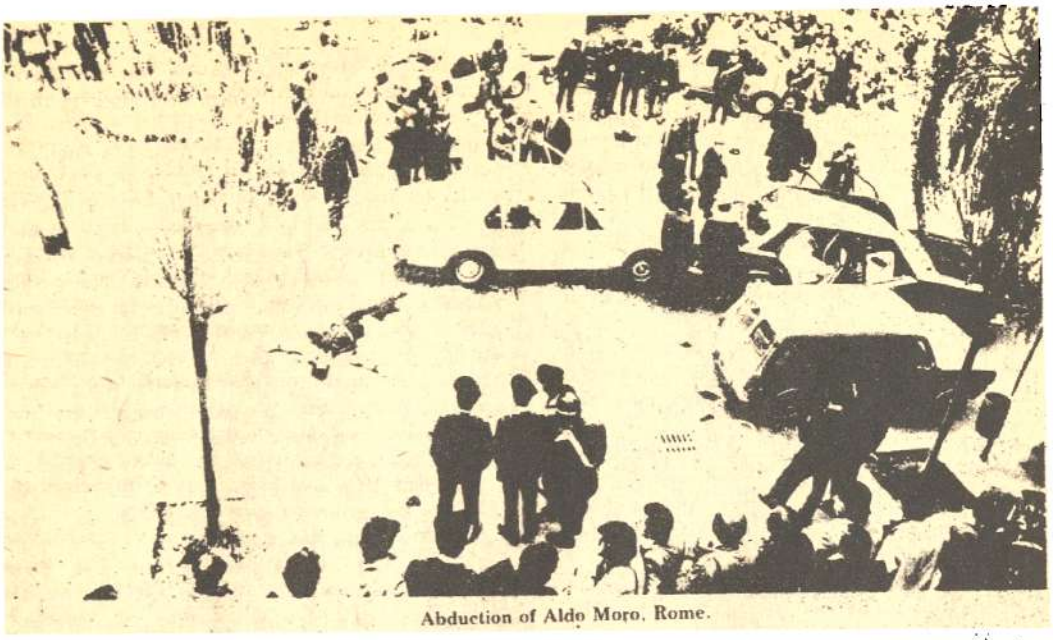
This said, it remains to be explained why the BR was successful where other groups failed. Although a great variety of marxist-leninist (maoist) groups sought to occupy the political terrain vacated by the PCI only the BR had the wits to understand that it was not possible to compete with the PCI in building a party of the classic type, based on mass organizations. The BR chose another road: the creation of a clandestine military organization, without direct links to "mass work" in the maoists' traditional style. From the beginning, the BR believed that the revolutionary alternative should be presented at the military level, the level of big-time politics, in direct confrontation with the State.

When, in 1968, while the student movement was still very active, the Collettivo Politico Metropolitano di Milano decided to "redefine marxism-leninism," it took the first steps in defining the orientation of the BR, formed from that group some months later. The leftist organizations Lotta Continua and Potere Operaio were criticized for their "immediatist" conception of class struggle and their defense of proletarian autonomy, as well as for their corresponding underestimation of the political dimensions of the struggle and of the political instruments needed for it: in a word, of the party. The hypothesis was that the party could be reconstructed at the military level.(7) Ten years later, the conceptions of the BR have not changed, but merely become more precise, above all with respect to their fidelity to leninist principles. "The conscious and imperative project of the communist vanguard is to create the conditions of an alternative to the existing state, to organize strategically the revolutionary potential of the proletariat."(8) But they have revised the typical marxism-leninism of the present day by affirming that the vanguard —i.e., the armed party—cannot "firmly consolidate the organization of proletarian power other than by the most rigid clandestinity."(9) It is on this point that the marginalist armed groups criticize the BR, accusing it of thinking of the "armed party as an organization separated from the masses."(10) For these groups, "the vanguard armed struggle is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the building of a politico-military organization of the proletariat. The other indispensable condition is the autonomous initiative of the masses."(11)

Aside from these intervanguard polemics, it appears evident today that the Red Brigades' adoption of a strictly military and clandestine line, refusing any mass practice, has kept them within the limits of an armed group, from both the political and the security points of view. From the latter point of view, such a line protects militants from exposing themselves in mass activity, as the members of other armed groups frequently do. This does not mean that members of BR refuse all and any involvement in (for example) union activity, but that they refuse any identification with leftist-oriented mass activity. Politically, their strict clandestinity prevents the BR from gauging its political efficacy otherwise than by the success of their actions against the political institutions, unlike the other armed groups who attempt to create factory organizations linked to their armed parties, provoke factory revolts, etc.

4. Reflux of the Workers' Struggles and the Crisis of Leftism

In their development the BR and the other armed groups were able to take advantage of the convergence of two social phenomena: the "eurocommunist" evolution of the PCI, and the crisis into which the leftist movement entered around 1974-75. As we have just seen, for the BR the fundamental political question is the confrontation with the State. According to the BR, leftism underestimates this "moment" and consequently doesn't engage in Politics as the BR understand it. In 1968 such criticism of



Abduction of Aldo Moro, Rome.

the leftists fell on deaf ears, as this period saw the social movement reach its height. But the years 1974-75 saw the reflux of the movement in the factories and a consequent crisis of the extreme left. With the decline of workers' activity, the unions were able to reorganize, integrating newly developed forms of struggle into their structure and absorbing or neutralizing the militancy of the leftist groups. The latter, after a brief phase of growth, gradually became institutionalized, above all as a result of their electoralism. Thinking that they could participate in political power side by side with the PCI, in practice they often supported this party against the DC. The PCI, now involved in the "historic compromise," abandoned its traditional post-war oppositional role for a policy of "national salvation" and a social contract. These transformations provoked feelings of frustration and impotent anger among many leftists and radical factory militants. "Progressively," recalled a participant in the armed movement, "we witnessed even our own organizations evolve toward the institutional struggle; they were becoming vaguely 'democratic' and increasingly dissociated from the interests of the workers. . . It was then that we decided to take up the armed struggle as the only form of struggle. This was in the autumn of 1974."(12)

The revival of union and PCI activity was naturally stronger and more rapid in the industrial North of the country, above all in Milan. It signalled the failure of the leftists, whose idea had been to build a "workers' leadership based on the Alfa/Pirelli/Siemens" industrial triangle and arising from the "hegemony of the mass worker," a concept dear to the "workerist" school. But it was exactly these mass workers who, suffering the consequences of the reorganization carried out in the 1970s in the big industries as well as the social consequences of the crisis, who came to be quite attracted by reformist unionism. This is one reason why "Milan became the most favorable terrain on which to revive the hypothesis of the party," in its armed form.(13)

Thus the years 1970-75 produced a situation in Italy which was very favorable to the proliferation of armed groups, due to the impasse reached by the autonomous tendencies within the working class, by the re-emergence of reformist control over the workers, and by the frustration this produced among leftist militants and active workers. The armed groups of this first phase came especially from the "workerist" circles, closely linked to the experience of the production line worker and very critical of the political conceptions of the BR, particularly of their idea of the armed party created from above, to which they opposed the idea of a party formed from below, on the basis of workers' organizations and factory nuclei. Today, however, it is evident that this project has not withstood the test of time. Such groups, more easily persecuted by the police, increasingly isolated from the very workers among whom they intended to militate, and, undermined by the incompatibility of clandestine and mass activity, are today—and this is particularly true of Prima Linea, the best known—in the shadow of the BR, whose military efficiency and rigid structure ineluctably came to dominate them.

5. Ideology and Mode of Operation of the BR

By now the reader will have a general idea of the political principles guiding the BR. Both in their vanguardist conception of the cadre party and in their statist conception of "socialism" the BR can be seen as a marxist-leninist organization. However, they differ from the other, more orthodox m-l groups in Italy on other questions. The core of the BR's analysis is the idea that capitalism is in a crisis caused by the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, which will inevitably result in a confrontation between American imperialism and Russian social-imperialism.

Here the BR modify the classic leninist idea of the transformation of imperialist war into civil war. For the BR it is necessary to unleash the "class civil war" in the imperialist metropoles now, in order to forestall a third world war. This political position is both influenced by the maoist notions of "people's war" and "red bases" and by the workerists' emphasis on the subjective factor. In the present period, "in which the principal contradiction is between the metropolitan proletariat and the imperialist bourgeoisie," the BR regard the Christian Democrats as grouping "those politicians most closely related to imperialist circles."(14) Through military confrontation with these "imperialist politicians"—a task that falls to the "revolutionary vanguard"—"the class struggle takes the form of a civil war."(15) Here we see a convergence between the BR's analysis and the classic anti-fascist ideology of the "parallel party," which believes that the legalist line of the PCI robs it of the ability to oppose either an eventual attack on the Soviet Union or a fascist coup in Italy carried out with the collaboration of the DC.

With respect to its mode of operation, the BR obey the laws of all military and clandestine organizations. The ideology of sacrifice and centralized discipline, hallmarks of all such organizations, are here carried to an extreme, justified by the stalinist ideology of the party. The BR don't hesitate to declare that it is through their activity that a "new proletarian person" will be forged:

> The political identity of the revolutionary militant means, first and foremost, the Party. It is through the principles, the strategy, the program, and the discipline of the Party that the militant, freely and autonomously, recognizes himself.(16)

The stalinist tradition serves as the cement of the clandestine structure, contrary to what happened within the armed groups in West Germany, where the militants, influenced by a sort of anarcho-individualism, rapidly came into conflict with the principles of clandestine military organization.(17) Unlike the members of these German groups, the BR members (or at least the majority of them) do not always live in *total* clandestinity. They also lead "normal" lives, so that they are, for instance, involved in union activities, mainly in the PCI-dominated unions, where they present the image of active but not extremist workers. But this changes from the moment that the militant goes into total clandestinity, which is the inevitable logic of this type of activity.

The experience of the Italian armed groups gives us a good idea of the functioning of a leninist clandestine organization inside modern society, and the political content of the social relations created within it. In an interview published in an Italian wide-circulation magazine, a militant of an armed group (not the BR) has given an account of a professional of armed struggle. The militants are obliged "to lead a double life and to follow strictly a certain mode of behavior, which is the proof of their suitability as militants; they cannot frequent political circles or mix with comrades from the movement. . . . All in all, they must lead a regular life. They cannot freely leave the organization, as this is a decision taken centrally. To join the organization the candidate has to present excellent credentials, and even then is followed during an 'apprenticeship' period. Intimate personal relations are forbidden, as these can cause conflicts within the organization. Living as a couple is prohibited unless the relationship is legalized. The public image of the clandestine activist has to be that of a model worker. At work, he doesn't discuss politics."(18)

The same principles regulate the attitudes of these militants in prison. For example, during a revolt in a special prison at Asinara (which "houses" many members of different armed groups), an anarchist prisoner, Horst Fantazzi, managed to send out a chronicle of the revolt to the journal *Anarchismo*. The prison Struggle Committee expelled Fantazzi from the prisoners' organization and ostracized him within the prison, on the ground that the text had not been ratified by it before being sent out. This exemplifies much behavior like that of the PCI under fascism, when party members in prison ostracized anyone not in complete agreement with the Party.

The least one can say is that it is hardly by employing such means to combat the old world, both in their own organizations and in relation to others, that the armed groups are going to usher in the new. On the contrary, they do no more than to perpetuate the forms of the old.

6. The Armed Groups and the PCI: From Criticism to Confrontation

Given the stabilizing role played by the PCI in the functioning of the parliamentary system and social institutions of Italy today, it is quite normal that the strategy of the armed groups responds to the political line of the party and is sensitive to its tactical changes. We have already seen how the development of armed struggle was closely related to the victory of the line of the "historic compromise" within the PCI. To a certain extent, the political attitude of groups like the BR toward the PCI has changed in response to the difficulties encountered by the "eurocommunist" line and also according to the events unleashed by the armed struggle itself. From the beginning, these groups considered it necessary to carry out a political struggle against the present direction of the party—the Berlinguer line. They never question the party, simply its present leadership. Basically, they consider the PCI as a secondary force in the tendency toward the creation of a "world imperialist state," while they regard the DC as a primary expression of this tendency. Neither is the PCI viewed as the expression of a tendency of national capital in Italy,(19) with interests in the fortunes of Italian capitalism at the world level. At most, it is seen as an expression of the "labor aristocracy." Like all other m-l groups, the BR believe that the rank and file of the party have been hoodwinked by the eurocommunist leadership, and that their armed actions will cause the ranks to open their eyes and rediscover the "correct line." The BR are quite explicit about this: "The solution will inevitably be found in the armed struggle, about which it will be necessary to take a position. The PC itself will be involved in this process. We here reaffirm our unitary position in relation to all comrades who choose the path of armed struggle."(20) This attitude—which the BR share with other groups of the extreme left, such as Lotta Continua and Potero

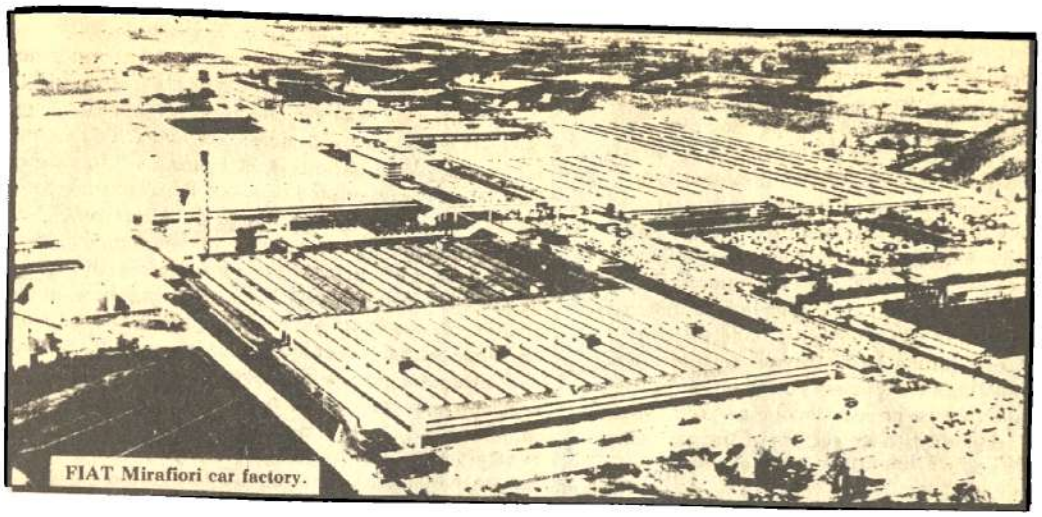
Operaio—is based on the idea that "the deepening of the crisis and the growing class confrontation is progressively reducing the viability of reformism. Such an analysis, however, fails to understand the historical and structural roots of reformism within the working class, and views its strength only in periods of economic expansion as inherently stabilizing. This type of analysis is therefore incapable of seeing that after the period of the reinforcement of the unions in the factories comes the growth of the role of the reformist party in the management of the crisis."(21) Moreover, this underestimation of the role of reformism in periods of crisis results in "viewing the State almost exclusively in its repressive aspect."(22) In conclusion, "such a practice (in relation to the PC) not only made the armed groups incapable of building an alternative to reformism inside the working class, but also left them indirectly dependent on the reformist project, insofar as their initiatives were directed against those sectors of the capitalist apparatus (the DC) which reformism was also attempting to push to the side."(23)

After the Moro affair, which should be understood as an attack on the line of the "historic compromise," the "armed party" was obliged to modify its tactical attitude toward the PCI slightly, but without altering the basic analysis of which we spoke above. In fact, the PCI's call for an "upsurge of democratic consciousness" against terrorism, its campaign of denunciation in the factories, couldn't leave these groups indifferent, the BR above all. In their "Strategic Resolution No. 5," the BR denounce the Berlinguer line as "representative of a bourgeois front" and an "instrument of the imperialist state of the multinationals." According to the BR the PCI, in collaboration with the "union bureaucracy," have in practice "denounced the revolutionary vanguard, trying to destabilize and later smash the resistance of the working class."(24) In this new situation, it is no longer sufficient just to criticize and condemn "eurocommunism." It is necessary to pass to the attack, and the Berlinguer line becomes a target of the armed struggle. After a first attack on a party bureaucrat in Genoa, in charge of the relations between State enterprises and the PCI, the BR directly attacked the Party's policy of denouncing BR sympathizers in the factories, killing the Communist trade unionist Rozza who had informed on a BR sympathizer to the police. This new step in the confrontation with the PC had contradictory consequences for the strategy of the BR. The reaction of the PCI to this attack was very rapid and the whole of the Party apparatus was mobilized in a reaction of self-defense. If up to then the BR's actions always had the goal of causing difficulties for the "eurocommunist" line, the killing of Rozza was understood as an attack on the Party as such and unified the whole bureaucracy around the apparatus. For the first time there was no convergence between the objectives of the BR and those of the "parallel party."

7. The Relapse of the "Movement" of 1977

The events of 1977 shook up the Italian extreme left and the armed groups. This movement had very special characteristics.(25) While it spread mainly among the youth, especially the socially marginalized, it also demonstrated a quite sophisticated political consciousness, able to alternate violence with the satirization of reformist institutions and those of the State. Nevertheless, this movement quickly reached a political and an organizational impasse. The mass assemblies which were the organizational forms of this movement were unable to extend beyond the student and marginal milieu. The attitude of the PCI also had an important bearing on this outcome. The PCI never attempted to co-opt the Movement but, on the contrary, from the beginning did everything possible to oppose it and to isolate it from the working class. A part of the Movement reacted strongly against this isolation, expressing its frustration by introducing new analytical concepts to deal with the situation. The "social worker" and the "diffuse factory" were the concepts through which they sought to give expression to the idea of a new revolutionary subject, after the failure of the political project based on the "mass worker" of the 1960s. This situation was further aggravated by the crisis of the radical factory militants who, very marked by a "workerist subjectivism," were forced to recognize their impotence in introducing the new discourse of the Movement into the factories. Once more, after a period during which events had overtaken them, the armed groups rediscovered a favorable terrain for recruitment.

The BR regarded the Movement of '77 as a type of non-political agitation, concerned only with defensive actions. They did not, for instance, hide their disagreement over the street fighting which was a feature of this period. According to them, the confrontation with the State or the machinery of government. By the way they level. As Sergio Bologna points out, non-political activities can in no way "influence the institutional balance of the State for the machinery of government. By the way they conducted their Turin trial and the Moro kidnapping, the BR demonstrated to the left-wing workers and to the Movement of '77 these forces' inability to act politically, i.e., to have any influence at the institutional level."(26) Even though this only demonstrates the BR's purely bourgeois conception of politics, the fact remains that a part of the movement of '77, above all the more violent "autonomous" wing, accepted these criticisms as correct, and associated itself with the positions of the armed groups, and in particular with those of the BR. It was not by chance, we may add, that the Moro kidnapping occurred immediately after the failure and break-up of the movement of '77; the moment was well chosen by the BR to demonstrate their political efficiency, their capacity to act at the level of the institutions, in contradistinction to that of a crisis-ridden left, of the Movement and of the Autonomists. Of course, many of the militants who passed from the autonomous movement into the armed groups did so without great ideological difficulty, thanks to their leninist conceptions of political action, political power, and revolution. Enzo Modugno, of the review *Marxiana*, clearly pointed this out when, in 1977, he criticized those who wanted to exclude the gun-toting autonomists from the Movement: "It is necessary to understand the reasons why these individuals resort to the gun. These autonomous groups cannot be reduced to three or four homicidally inclined youths; . . . what is today called the ideology of the P.38 was only yesterday the political line of the revolutionary parties."(27)



FIAT Mirafiori car factory.

8. The BR and the Working Class

Before dealing with the consequences that the actions of the BR and the armed groups have had for the workers' movement, two points should be made clear. Firstly, many members of the BR are workers. However, it is not by this criterion that we judge the BR to be "separated or not from the working class." We consider the BR to be a particular and momentary expression of a traditional tendency within the Italian workers' movement, the stalinist tendency. Secondly, it is important to understand the BR's position on the process of self-organization which dominated the Italian workers' experience since the end of the 1960s. Basically, the BR consider every and any workplace struggle to be defensive, lacking in any political content (in the institutional sense). The only political actions are those which are part of the "offensive movement of proletarian resistance," i.e., those which have a "politico-military content."(28) On the basis of this extremely militarist conception of political activity, the BR reject any expression of autonomous factory organization as a manifestation of "centrism" (note the typically stalinist terminology). To these autonomous factory organizations, the BR oppose the idea of "organs of the proletarian State."(29) Here is an entire political programme in a nutshell.

In describing the reaction of the workers to recent events, we will schematically consider three aspects of the situation: 1) In the present social economic crisis, a large part of the working class feels an insecurity provoked by the worsening of their living standards. This sentiment is projected—and channeled by the State—into a demand for order and social stability, for the repression of criminality and of the armed groups.

2) It was in such an atmosphere that the political parties and the mass media, as well as the State's ideological apparatus, could organize demonstrations protesting against Moro's death. For its part, the Left condemned the BR on two counts. On the one hand, it evoked the danger of a fascist coup, thus resurrecting the old anti-fascist sentiments; on the other hand, employing the well-worn ideology which presents the police as "workers," it tried to appeal to people's emotions over the five police agents shot dead during Moro's kidnapping. The truth is that the demonstrations which took place were the expressions of a total mobilization of political society. Even sectors of the population not normally disposed to act politically joined in, such as small shopkeepers who closed their doors in sympathy. In many factories, workers were paid during the strike of protest at Moro's death. But we should also point out that many people who came onto the streets did so neither to praise Moro nor to bury the BR, but simply to express their feelings of confusion about the event.

3) In the following days, all this created a feeling of unease among many factory militants, even among activists of the union left and of the political groups who did not identify themselves with the climate of national unity that the political parties sought to create around the event. This uneasiness was expressed, for example, in Milan, over a proposed demonstration against the murder of two militants of *Autonomia*, killed by the police (or by fascists) after Moro's assassination. In the Milan factories, there was a big debate on whether or not to strike and join the demonstration. Despite the opposition of the PCI, the workers and the factory organizations ended up participating massively; for many, though, this was only reasonable as they had already demonstrated in favor of Moro! In any event, more than 100,000 people, almost as many as for Moro's burial, came onto the streets, and it was evident that the demonstration carried an implicit criticism of the Sacred Union desired by the PCI.

9. The PCI and the Criminalization of the Autonomous Movement among the Workers

Following on the heels of the Moro case, the PCI attempted to profit from the general mood of confusion to witch-hunt the radical factory nuclei and to tighten its control over the working class in general. But this policy met with little success, mainly because the workers themselves did not support it. The right and the left within the unions also reacted against this policy as both feared that it would allow the PCI irreversibly to reinforce its repressive power

Renato Curcio, head of the Red Brigades.

Guido Rossa

within the factories. The union right maintained that only the State should exercise the function of repression, while the left, fearing that its own members might be caught up in the PCI hunt for extremists, opposed any wave of repression in the factories, though they nevertheless clearly distanced themselves from the BR.

The PCI has accused groups of radical workers of being potential members of the BR. Even in those factories where the PCI is strongly represented, however, the workers have rejected this attempt at criminalization and denunciation refusing, as they say in Italy, to become the State, to internally police the factories. Only some bureaucrats (like Rozza) from the Communist union apparatus have dared to denounce sympathizers of the armed groups to the police. Nevertheless, there have been cases where the PCI has achieved positive results in its crusade against the activities of the extra-union militants. A good example is what happened to an autonomous workers collective at the port of Genoa. After distributing a leaflet entitled "Neither the BR nor the State," this group was violently denounced by the PCI as "brigatisti," which led to its isolation and political weakness. One should recall that after 1977 this group had achieved a certain strength in the port, since the war an untouchable fief of the PCI.

At the same time, however, reformism made other uses of anti-terrorism, above all as a stick with which to beat any combativity in the factories. But here too, things didn't go so well for the PCI, at least in the cases we know of. In SIP (National Telephone Company) in Milan, during a general assembly of workers intended to ratify the contract (May '78), the union attempted to use the anti-BR, pro-national unity line, to justify the need for "a reasonable attitude in this period of crisis." The workers' reaction was straight to the point: We don't care about these stories; we're here to talk about our concrete situation as wage laborers. This case exemplifies the attitude of the mass of workers to the BR: not only do they fail to see what all this military activity has to do with them, but they also recognize that all of the political forces are making capital out of it, from the PCI to the Christian Democrats. For the workers, it is all Politics with a capital "p," in the traditional sense—i.e., exactly the sense in which the BR understand it: an activity completely separate from the workers, from their conditions of existence, from their problems and struggles. It is moreover significant that the unions now have much more difficulty in calling protest strikes whenever an armed action is carried out. As a worker said to some journalists during one of these strikes, "Will you go on strike if they kill me?" while another commented, "Now that they're knocking off one a day, I won't have much of a wage at the end of the month if we go on strike for all of them."(30) In January '79, when the PCI called a protest strike against the killing of Rozza by the BR's, 3000 out of the 6000 workers of Alfa-Romeo in Milan stayed at home on sick leave (and for two more days following the strike) in a clear manifestation of the desire to separate their interests from those of the Party and above all of their refusal of such political strikes.

On the other hand, one slogan of the BR, the simplest, is quite well received by the masses, when they insist that "those responsible for the difficult situation of the people are the corrupt politicians of the DC." This slogan was in fact used by the PCI for many years. Further, in relation to the BR, the workers very often manifest an attitude of expectation, seeing them as those who can "do justice for us," beating the corrupt politician, the hated foreman, the exploiting boss. All of this makes it even more evident how substitutionist these types of actions are.

Today in Italy, after a few years during which its control was severely weakened by the development of the autonomous struggles of the workers, reformism has returned to dominate the scene, including the factories. It is true that oppositional tendencies still confront the line of "national sacrifice," but these nuclei of opposition, above all in the service sector, by and large feed off the demagogic and unsophisticated way in which the PCI presents its policy of "historic compromise" and "national salva-

tion." As the economic crisis deepens, fear conquers a growing number of workers (though this doesn't mean that the situation could not rapidly change); and, more than the political spectacle offered by the BR, the actions carried out by the armed "workerist" groups run the risk of reinforcing that fear, facilitating the acceptance of the reformist project. The case of Alfa-Romeo in Milan is worth considering in this respect.

This enormous factory, the stronghold of workers' agitation since 1969, is something of a thermometer of the Milanese working class. An autonomous workers' collective is active inside the factory and has led some important struggles.(31) When the factory management decided to reestablish compulsory overtime, this collective mounted pickets at the factory gates. Their action, however, was not well received and they failed to carry the majority of the workers with them. For the first time ever, some PC goons tried to expel the workers of the collective from the factory. Shortly afterwards, an armed group sabotaged the machinery. The workers, in response, fearing that they would lose their jobs because of the risk of the factory closing down, showed less hostility to the union policy of sacrifices, working an extra Saturday to recover production lost because of the sabotage.

The radical factory collectives which still exist, more or less throughout Italy, have only just begun to discuss, though hesitantly, the question of terrorism. Their main and immediate problem is to defend themselves against the PCI's attempts to outlaw them. Thus far, they have done so by exploiting the contradictions of the PC, in particular its changes in attitude toward the DC, by refusing to discuss the question of the armed groups with the Party, and by opposing the question of the workers' living conditions to that of the "danger of terrorism." Nevertheless, many workers' collectives have already explicitly criticized the armed groups and their adverse effects on revolutionary activities in the factories, attacking in particular the substitutionist character of their actions.(33) But these collectives have yet to discuss the basic principles of the armed groups, or the problem of the State and its relation to revolutionary activity. Indeed, the echo found by political terrorism in Italy among many militants from the leninist left has been in large part due to the inability of this current to deal with the problem of the State. Each time that the social movement has had to confront the State, in 1972 and again in 1977, leftism was capable only of an electoralist response, in contrast to which the BR could present themselves as "effective" in the realm of political action. It is in this sense that we can say that the relation between the radical factory nuclei on the one hand and the BR and the armed groups on the other reflects the reigning impotence that the former feel in relation to the social reality, above all in the factories. In the same way, "the experience of armed struggle expressed and still expresses, for a part of the proletariat, the need for a radical break with the present state of things. The problem resides not in the need to exorcise this necessity by tactical means, but to locate it within the worker himself, since only when this necessity is expressed through a process of self-organization will it then have a role, one based not on strictly political objectives like that of the confrontation with the State, but on the process of the growth of class power."(34)

10. The Impotent Arms of Leninism

In modern capitalist society, any armed activity must necessarily be based on an organization of a military type. As such, it cannot escape the logic of the State which, in the last resort, determines the whole of its organizational functioning and internal social relations, as well as its relations to the social environment. Therefore, the model of the armed struggle organizations is perfectly compatible with the bolshevik conception of the revolutionary party. For the BR, as for the German RAF, this organization must be built on, and through, the armed struggle. As has already been well pointed out, the RAF "added to the substitutionism of Lenin, who replaced the proletariat by the Party, by replacing the Party by the armed struggle."(35) It is, then, quite correct to see in the emergence of these groups and activities "more the product of the end of a period than the signs of the emergence of a new one." But these old conceptions of revolution and the leninist foundations of these groups are not merely evident in their form of organization. They are to be found also in the content of their revolutionary project, in the violence against the State which they see as the essential aspect of social transformation. This is why it is wrong to see these groups as raising "the problem of the destruction of the State." On the contrary, their conception of the revolution remains an essentially political one—the objective is the destabilization of the State—while their principles of functioning rapidly lead toward the creation of a mini-State organization, a mirror-image of the enemy it is fighting against.

Furthermore, we might also refer to the famous "military question" of the revolution that many people also believe has been raised by the activities of these groups. To be sure, the "military question" was one of the specific aspects of the bourgeois revolutions of the past, characterized by the weakness of the working class and the resulting strategies of class alliances. The end of the nineteenth century in Europe, the beginning of the twentieth century in Russia and, later on, the upheavals in the countries which freed themselves from colonialism, provide us with plenty of examples. Today, however, in the countries where capitalism rules in its most developed form, not only can the social revolution not be conceived as a "party question," but it also cannot be conceived as a "military question." In modern societies, where wage-labor relations have become generalized throughout private and collective life, the subversion of the capitalist order can only be realized through the takeover and control of the productive apparatus, through its transformation on the basis of new social principles, under the control of the producers themselves. While the attempt to accomplish this is bound to lead to violent confrontations with the bourgeoisie, its State and the political and social forces which defend state capitalism, there can be no doubt that these confrontations will mainly occur within the framework of this process of taking over the apparatus of social production (because its control is the key to political power in society) and not on the traditional and specialized level of military action. It is therefore hard to imagine what use the "military experience" of the armed groups would be. On the contrary, the success of the anti-capitalist forces in these confrontations

will depend on their superiority at the level of the reorganization of society and not on any so-called military efficiency of a specialized group (which in fact would be difficult to imagine, given the efficiency of the repressive forces of the State).

The recent experience of the Portuguese "revolution" of 1974-75, despite its limits, makes this point clearer. When the right-wing putsch of November 25th took place, what remained of the real anti-capitalist activity of the Portuguese proletariat was insufficient even to consider opposing a coup which clearly represented the beginning of a period of the imposition of law and order. What this implies is that the workers were unable to develop and organize a different and clearly anti-capitalist social project, so that the defense of the "revolution" was delegated—automatically and without discussion—to the specialized apparatuses of the "military question," the populist sectors of the Army and the armed cells of leftist groups. The result is well known. In other words, here as elsewhere, the "military question" was raised because the *social question* had been buried (or solved) beforehand. In fact, if the bourgeoisie is able to push the class confrontation to the strictly military level, the proletariat will be smashed in advance. Earlier in history, the much more important example of the Spanish revolution of 1936 also showed how the development and predominance of military activity meant the neutralization of the social revolution.

If the present crisis of capitalism deepens, if social confrontations erupt and spread, and if the wage-laboring masses begin to lose faith in the system, then, little by little, we will see capitalism and its State forced into a situation where the choices will be few. The use of the traditional mechanism for integrating the working class will basically depend on the capacity of the parties and the unions to control the responses of the proletariat. If this does not produce results, the capitalist State will be obliged to use its repressive machine, with far greater force than the armed struggle groups have obliged it to use up to now. If, despite all this, the working class is able to find in its struggles the determination and initiative to go further, to organize itself on a new basis (refusing leaderships, the delegation of power, and strategies of class conciliation) to build a framework for subverting the present order and system of production, then circumstances will be transformed. The politics of a radical social movement will replace military strategies of the apprentice officers of the "brigades" and "armies" of all kinds, devoid of any anti-capitalist perspective for the mass of wage laborers.

Notes

1. Monicelli, **L'Ultrasinistra in Italia, 1968-1978** (Bari: Laterza, 1978), pp. 160-161.

2. **Le Monde**, 7-1-79.

3. "Workerism" was a political tendency that appeared in Italy in the sixties around the journal **Quaderni Rossi** (later **Classe Operaia**), whose best known theoreticians were Tronti, Cacciari, Rosa, Negri, Scalzone, and Bologna. Tronti's book **Workers and Capital** (several chapters of which have been translated and published in **Telos**) is the basic text of this current, which had a strong influence on the Italian ultra-left in the sixties and seventies. Workerism emphasized the "subjective factor" in social change and, drawing on the experience of the struggles of Southern workers in northern Italian factories, looked to the "mass worker"—in contrast to the skilled craftsmen of the past—as the agent of change. The recent evolution of most of the workerist theoreticians attests to the leninist basis of their theories: Tronti, Rosa, and Cacciari have joined the PCI and today are part of the Party's ideological apparatus, while Negri and Scalzone play a significant role within the neo-leninist tendency of Autonomia Organizata. (Both were recently arrested, accused of complicity in the Red Brigade killing of Aldo Moro.) In his latest text, Tronti defends the eurocommunist conception of the State, characterizing it as "neither more nor less than the modern form of the autonomous organization of the working class." Only Sergio Bologna and the group around the journal **Primo Maggio** have opened themselves to a critique of leninism.

4. Monicelli, **op. cit.**, p. 160.

5. **Ibid.**, p. 164.

6. It is interesting to note that Italy is the European country with both the strongest Communist Party and the strongest fascist party, the MSI.

7. Collective text, "Note sul'esperienza di lotta armata," in **Collegamenti** 1:3-4 (1978).

8. Brigate Rosse, "Risoluzione della direzione strategica delle BR:" in **Moro, una tragedia italiana** (Rome: Saggi, 1978), pp. 103 and 106.

9. **Ibid.**

10. "Parla un terrorista," interview with a member of an armed group, in **Panorama** 6-6-78.

11. **Ibid.**

12. **Ibid.**

13. "Note sul'esperienza di lotte armata," **op. cit.**

14. "Risoluzione della direzione strategica delle BR," **op. cit.**, pp. 51-54.

15. **Ibid.**, p. 66.

16. **Ibid.**, p. 68.

17. Cf. the experience of the German June 2 Movement, as told by Bommi Baumann in **Terror or Love?** (New York: Grove Press, 1979).

18. "Parla un terrorista," **op. cit.**

19. The PCI-controlled National League of Cooperatives, which groups firms from a number of sectors, including agriculture, commerce, and construction, is the third largest economic group in Italy, with investments in other countries (especially in the Third World).

20. Interview of BR spokesman in **Espresso** (September 1971).

21. "Note sul'esperienza . . .," **op. cit.**

22. **Ibid.**

23. **Ibid.**

24. **Le Monde** 26-1-79.

25. See Sergio Bologna, "La tribu delle talpa," in **Primo Maggio** 8.

26. Sergio Bologna, text on the BR (unpublished, but circulating in Milan in radical political circles).

27. Monicelli, **op. cit.**, p. 151.

28. "Risoluzione della direzione strategica . . .," **op. cit.**, p. 95.

29. "Secundo documento delle BR," January 1979.

30. Monicelli, **op. cit.**, pp. 183 and 185.

31. See the articles on Italy in nos. 9 and 10 of **Spartacus**.

32. **La Repubblica** 12-6-78.

33. "Note sul'esperienza . . .," **op. cit.**

34. **Ibid.**

35. "La Bande a Baader," in **La guerre sociale** 2 (1978).

NOTES ON THE CONCEPT OF CLASS

In recent years much discussion has been devoted to the nature and delineation of social classes and much of this work has been at least nominally inspired by marxian ideas. Yet radical discussions of social class seem ignorant of the role that the concept of class plays in Marx's work. I shall argue that the class concept has a very delimited role in Marx's thought, one that differs greatly from the role assigned to it in recent radical analysis. I shall further argue that this difference reflects a misunderstanding of the relations in marxian theory between abstract categories and the analysis of particular situations.

New approaches to the concept of class, which appear periodically in leftist publications, usually presume a congruence between social class and consciousness. E.P. Thompson, for example, argues that the English working class at the beginning of the nineteenth century is most appropriately viewed, not just in terms of its structural relations to capitalist production, but as forming a unique identity for itself through the creation of a set of separate social institutions and a characteristic way of viewing the world. Thus he wants to restrict the term "working class" to reference to a social group defined by cohesive cultural experiences and consequently has "been cautious as to generalizing beyond English experience."(1) Defining class as "a cultural as much as an economic formation," he is led to assert the existence of distinct English, Scottish, and Welsh working classes. At the same time, despite his protestations to the contrary, he defines "working class" in terms of the structural relations of the production process, as is indicated by his use of the same term to describe a social group in each of England, Scotland, and Wales. Thompson indeed is caught in a contradiction; its root is his desire to use the idea of class to represent both an abstract definition of social position and a description of specific life experiences.

To take another example, the Ehrenreichs argue for the existence of a new class in contemporary America, which they call the professional-managerial class. As the name indicates, it is defined by its (supposed) relation to the production process. At the same time, it is assumed that such a group will form a homogeneous cultural unit; and in fact the concept is introduced to explain the emergence of the New Left.(2) Related theories of a "new working class" with a new ideology, composed of professional employees, have been popular in Europe for a while, as the works of Andre Gorz and Serge Mallet attest. These theories, which define new classes in order to account for specific political and cultural categories, encounter the same difficulties as Thompson's. By being made specific enough to fit a particular historical conjuncture, the concept of class loses its usefulness for understanding the unifying features of capitalist development. Instead it functions merely as a terminologically marxist analog of bourgeois sociological categories.

Similar approaches are to be found in theories advanced by "marxist feminists" discussing, for instance, the class position of housewives, or whether a woman's class is determined by her own job or by that of her husband or father. The *New Left Review* is a breeding ground for new "scientific" structuralist delimitations of social classes, which frequently imply that the (presumed) ideological viewpoint of a social group needs to be considered in order to determine that group's class position. What the theories I am talking about share is the view that class position and ideology correspond. Sometimes this correspondence is accomplished through definition, as in the structuralist conception of class as constituted by the intersection of political, economic, and ideological structures, or in Thompson's discussion of the working class "making itself." Other approaches derive consciousness from an objectively delineated class position, as the Ehrenreichs' does. Despite their apparent differences, all these approaches attempt to use "class" as a concept immediately applicable to the analysis of concrete conditions. If only we had the correct theory of class, they suggest, social and political analysis would follow immediately. Thus arguments about whether the working class is growing or shrinking lead to discussions of whether socialist propaganda should be aimed at the "workers" or the "people." The analysis, that is, will allow the self-appointed vanguard to find the correct point of intervention and the correct strategy to lead the masses to the promised land.

Marx's approach, at least in his theoretical works, was diametrically opposed to that described above. His method was that of forming abstract categories that must be combined with other, increasingly specific categories to provide an understanding of any particular situation. As this is only a special case of the method of science, an example from physics can illustrate this point. The law of gravity implies that objects fall toward the ground at a certain rate of acceleration. Any particular object, however, will not fall at this rate. Hence, in order to understand the behavior of a particular falling object, we are forced to introduce other concepts such as those of friction, air currents, etc. This in turn requires an analysis of the particular properties of the object under consideration, as well as the condition of the environing air at that moment. None of this negates the generality of the law of gravity, however; it simply indicates that its level of abstraction must be recognized.

1. E.P. Thompson, **The Making of the English Working Class** (New York: Random House [Vintage], 1966), p. 13.

2. Barbara and John Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class" and "The New Left and the Professional-Managerial Class," **Radical America** 11(2):7-31 and (3), 1977.

For an amplification of the argument made here, see Gary Roth, "A New Class Theory," **Root & Branch** 5:37-40, 1978.

The situation is similar with Marx's definition of capitalist social classes in the course of his analysis of the laws of motion of capitalist production. He begins in volume I of *Capital* with the concept of "capital in general"; from this perspective the working class appears as the collective producer of surplus-value, even as the capitalist class appears as its collective employer and exploiter. As the analysis progresses, Marx refines the concept of the collective laborer by distinguishing between productive and unproductive labor. Only the former produces surplus-value, while the latter performs duties (such as sales) that are necessary for the capitalist system but don't produce surplus-value. Both types of labor, however, are performed by the working class, which still consists of all those who work for wages (or salaries) at the discretion, and for the benefit, of the owners of the means of production, the capitalists. This remains true even as both the working class and the capitalist class are shown to contain many subgroups, with different conditions of life and even conflicting interests. Class position is for Marx only one aspect of the totality of social conditions that must be understood if we are to analyze an individual's or a group's likely activity in the social arena. He applies the concept of class at the *most abstract* level of his analysis of the social relations of bourgeois society; that is, his category of class forms the foundation of his theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of capitalism.

The power of Marx's abstraction of class relations may be demonstrated in the analysis of capitalist crises. In normal circumstances workers share with everyone else the fundamental ideas of bourgeois society. Marx saw these ideas reproduced in theoretical form in the so-called science of political economy, which his "critique of political economy" attacked as the reigning ideas of the bourgeois epoch. Marx sought to expose the fundamental opposition between the interests of workers and capitalists, which becomes manifest (in varying ways, depending on the specific circumstances) in periods of crisis. The division of society into capitalists and workers leads to these recurring crises of profitability through the workings of the laws of motion of capitalism. When the crisis shatters the "community of interest," workers begin to act in defense of their own interests. To exert an influence at the social level, however, workers are forced to act collectively, which leads to modifications of their ideas. As the assumptions of political economy no longer correspond to their experiences, they begin to question them and to formulate new ideas to explain their collective activity. Since the working class is not homogeneous, the ideas that different workers put forth will vary depending on their specific past ideas and contemporary activities. Leninists tend to assume that such ideas are perfectly predictable and are embodied in the current ideas of the revolutionary vanguard. Marxists, however, see that one can only anticipate these ideas in their broadest outlines, on the basis of an understanding of how the changed social conditions brought on by the crisis are likely to lead to changed social action.

The analysis of any specific situation requires a conceptualization of its historical particularity within the framework provided by the general theory. The marxian categories, such as that of class, can be applied directly only at the level of analysis for which they were developed. To deal with more concrete issues, categories more specific to the situation under study need to be developed. An analysis of the New Left, for instance, would require a look at the particular ideas of the participants, ideas which were not predetermined by (though they were likely influenced by) their class position. An adequate analysis would also take into account other specific historical trends —such as the changing character of higher education since the Second World War, the impact of the draft and the Viet Nam War, the evolution of race relations, the illusion of permanent prosperity, etc. On the other hand, the evolution and relevance of these phenomena to the New Left would be incomprehensible without an understanding of the social context in which they occurred. Marx's theory provides us with an understanding of the social context within which movements such as the New Left develop. The more abstract categories thus provide the context within which particular categories must be developed in order to understand specific situations.

The contemporary "Marxists" mentioned at the beginning of this article follow in the wake of bourgeois social science in their confusion of the abstractness of categories with the concreteness of reality. Their categories are either too general or too specific: Either, like many structuralists, they form ahistorical categories that are presumed to be applicable to widely different types of social system (and consequently are more abstract than Marx's historically specific concepts). Or they form concepts that are so particular as to provide no understanding of the relation of one situation to another within the same system, as in the theory of a professional-managerial class, which obscures the essential continuity of capitalism and the particularity of the present at one and the same time. In either case such theories cannot provide much *explanation*, as they don't tell us how a variety of social situations are both alike and also different from other social situations.

One last point needs to be made. All of Marx's concepts are historically specific. They arise from the analysis of certain social systems (modes of production) and their usefulness in explaining other social systems remains an open question to be answered on pragmatic grounds. This holds true for the concept of class. The idea of social classes arose out of capitalist development and is particularly suited to the understanding of capitalism. Despite the assertion in the *Communist Manifesto* that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," the marxian method requires that we not assume *a priori* that the concept of social classes would be useful in the analysis of all societies. The question as to whether the concept of class would be useful in analyzing a particular type of social system must remain an open one until it has proved its value in that analysis. This can be seen in anthropology, where the attempt to use the class concept to analyze "primitive" societies has so far resulted in a hopeless muddle, and other concepts appear more applicable. It even remains an open question whether feudalism is best analyzed in terms of social class, as the feudal orders had characteristics that made them quite distinct from classes. In any case, my purpose here is not to provide answers to these questions, but simply to raise them.

Stephen Soldz

ROOT & BRANCH

With the 1960s the eternal prosperity, the managed economy, and the attendant "death of ideology" of the post-World War II period came to an end. The combination of unemployment and inflation in the capitalist West and the inability of the state-run systems of the East to satisfy their working classes are producing unsettling effects throughout "industrial society": the deterioration of conditions in the big cities, which nonetheless draw an increasing proportion of the world's population; the brutalization of the seemingly permanent army of the unemployed, which has been accumulating in these urban centers; the instability of governments in the democracies, in the absence of any clear policy alternatives, inspiring a drift toward open authoritarianism; the development of opposition to the party dictatorships in the East, both in the form of liberalism among the intelligentsia and, more significantly, in that of strike movements among the working classes; and the continuing decay of ideologies and social norms. All this testifies to the basic character of the "limits of growth" that modern society is coming up against, and also raises the possibility, as the situation continues to deteriorate, of a revival of mass opposition to the existing social order.

Whatever disappointments Nature has in store for us in the future, the limits we are encountering now are not ecological but social ones. It is not even socially caused environmental disaster but the third world war that most directly threatens our extinction. That a fascination with zero-growth has replaced the nineteenth century's discovery of eternal progressive development is only the ideological form of the experience of the bankruptcy as a social system of capitalism and its state-run analog.

As yet we cannot speak of the existence anywhere in the world of forces or social movements which represent a real possibility of social revolution. But, while in no way inevitable, social revolution is clearly necessary if possibilities for an enjoyable and decent life are to be realized—and perhaps if human life is to be preserved at all. For this reason we see the overthrow of the present order of society as the goal to which we as a group wish to contribute. While the ideal we aim for has been called by a variety of names—communism, socialism, anarchism—what is important to us is the idea of a system in which social life is consciously controlled by those who activities make it up. Capitalism has created the basis of such a system by so interweaving the production and consumption of all producers that only collective solutions are possible to meet the producers' need to control the means and process of production and distribution. To eliminate the problems caused by the subordination of social production to capital's need for profit, the working class must take direct responsibility for what it already produces. We must decide what we will produce, and by what means and under what conditions to produce it. This means opposition not only to the existing ruling class of capitalists and politicians but to any future managers or party leaders seeking to hold power in our name. **Root & Branch**, therefore, holds to the tradition of the workers' movement expressed in the Provisional Rules of the First International, beginning with the consideration "that the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves." This tradition we see embodied in the efforts workers have made to take direct control of the means of production and social coordination: the Paris Commune, the Russian soviets and factory committees, the workers' councils of Germany and Italy, the Spanish collectives of '36, the General Workers Council of 1956.

From the past we draw not only inspiration and still-meaningful ideas but also lessons on mistakes to be avoided. The fundamental idea of the old labor movement, that the working class can build up its forces in large organizations in preparation for the "final conflict," has proven false. Whether the organization was that of reformist or of revolutionary parties, producer or consumer cooperatives, or trade unions, its success has always turned out to be a success in adapting to the exigencies of survival within capitalism. The Bolshevik alternative of the small vanguard of revolutionaries preparing for the day when they would lead the masses to the conquest of state power has also proven useless for our purposes. Such parties have had a role to play only in the unindustrialized areas of the world, where they have provided the ruling class needed to carry out the work of forced economic development unrealized by the native bourgeoisie. In the developed countries they have been condemned either to sectarian insignificance or to transformation into reformist parties of the social-democratic type.

History has indicated that revolutionary movements cannot be created by revolutionary groups, however correct their understanding or dedicated their will. While both theories and organizations have roles to play, revolutions develop from the active experience of masses of people confronted with social, economic, and political crisis. Nevertheless, the principles of such a future movement must guide the current activities of those who wish to contribute to its creation. These principles—in contrast to those of the old labor movement—must signify a total break with the foundation of capitalist society, the relation between wage-labor and capital. As our goal is that of workers' control over social life, our principles must be those of **direct, collective action. Direct**, because the struggle for control of society begins with the struggle to control our fight against the current order. **Collective**, because the only successes which have a future are those involving (if only in principle) the international working class as a whole. We recognize that the working class does not have one uniform identity, and thus experiences oppression under capitalism differently according to age, sex, race, nationality, etc. However, what defines and thus unites the working class is its exploitation by capital, even if the character of that exploitation varies giving the appearance of separate problems and thus separate solutions. While it is true that the struggle against capitalism will not by itself solve these problems, overcoming capitalist exploitation raises the possibility of their solutions. Thus, each working-class struggle, even if it does not address an issue experienced by the class as a whole, must be aimed at the real enemy, capital, and not other members of the class. In the same way, we think workers must overcome in action the division between employed and unemployed, between unionized and non-unionized members of their class. Such a view automatically brings us into opposition to existing organizations like trade unions, which exist by representing the short-term interests of particular groups of workers within the existing social structure. Similarly, we are in conflict with the parties and sects which see their own dominance over any future movement as the key to its success.

We see ourselves as neither leaders nor bystanders but as part of the struggle. We are for the development of many groups like ours and also for cooperation in common tasks. We initiate and participate in activity where we work, study, and live. As a group, we would like to be of some use in making information available about past and present struggles and in discussing the conclusions to be drawn from this history and its future extension. We organize lectures and study groups. Since 1969 we have published a journal and series of pamphlets. We hope others will join us to discuss the ideas and the materials we publish and that they will help us to develop new ideas and means to circulate and realize them.

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COVER PHOTO: A demonstration in Beijing, 14 January 1979: "Down with hunger! Down with oppression!"

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